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BEQUEATHED BY
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1931

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BY
BERTHA THOMAS

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THE HOUSE ON THE SCAR

BY
BERTHA THOMAS

AUTHOR OF "PROUD MAISIE," "CRESSIDA," "THE VIOLIN PLAYER."
ETC.

NEW YORK :
JOHN W. LOVELL COMPANY
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THE HOUSE ON THE SCAR.

CHAPTER I.

DAVID SPEAKS.

DAVID had spoken. Three hours later he sat at home in his bedroom, looking back on his outbreak with a dull incredulity. Certainly Balaam's ass, when started on its journey, as little expected to have its lips opened on the way as had David to-night.

Yet what could he tell her that she did not know?

As on former evenings—evenings without number—he had entered Sunnyside, her home, where all was as congenial and animating to him, as here in his own much wealthier home all was irremediably the reverse. Her hand everywhere, you felt, from the moment you crossed the hall threshold. Her presiding

choice—her flowers, her books, her devices, her handiwork—that wonderful little sketch of the Orestone Rock facing you on the wall, as you came in. David, himself an indefatigable art-student, had “taken” that famous, long-suffering headland over and over again, and failed just as often to catch, so as to create it afresh, the complex, indefinite impression of that sport of nature’s—the moist brilliancy of the colors of the monster rock, its fantastic outlines, the waves’ play around, as she, Amy, had done, in that rapid, unfinished study.

In the room within, David, nicknamed “the Owlet” by his sisters, for the shy awkwardness and taciturnity that seemed to grow on him rather than to wear off, the more he was dragged into society, could sit and talk and comport himself with comparative ease, expanding as in his natural element. Why? The common blind craving for more money than you have got, the hot pursuit of display as a means of social pretension, the hankering after coarse amusement, the rage for petty gossip, that were the Alpha and Omega of life in his own family but answered to none of the needs of his queer, perverse nature, were here so blessedly absent. That, at least, was one reason. The music of life was as different as

the many-toned symphonies of an orchestra from the blast of three hundred trumpets, which persons of distinction have nevertheless been known to prefer.

Mrs. Beverley had been called into the hall to interview a beggar. "Mother's indiscriminate charity brings tramps to the door in ceaseless procession, like pilgrims to the Loretto Madonna's shrine," sighed Amy playfully. "I know they are mostly undeserving, but so are some of the people we ask to dinner."

She was standing by the window, and unfastened it as she spoke, to look out. An open verandah ran along the front of Sunnyside Villa, a round-shaped, pink-colored house with a peaked roof; not large, but queening it somehow, by its picturesqueness and apartness, over the trim-built but monotonous little marine villas scattered in and about the tiny hillside town of Orestone, that nestles on green slopes down to the margin of its well landlocked harbor at the meeting of many waters—the seven inland running creeks, that here diverge. Tall spreading elms rose opposite the windows in a heavy clump; the garden had the southern luxuriance which is the pride of this obscure Devonshire seaside nook. Here ran a fuchsia hedge; there, stood clusters of bright rosy and

pale-blue hydrangeas, and myrtles white with bloom ; and citron and lemon trees, with the yellow fruit hanging, trailed against the wall. The air was heavy with the scent of invisible blossoms. Below, lights twinkled in the little harbor, a bit of moon overhanging the lofty sheltering heights across ; overhead, a spangled, dark-blue intensity.

"See, David," she said with a fascinated expression. "What a motley of light and darkness ; a feast of lanterns ! If only you or I were a Whistler, now."

He was watching her in silence as she stood gazing entrancedly out towards the sea.

"Amy!"—She turned with a start, as though it must be somebody else, not David, speaking of a sudden in that voice of desperate resolution. "Amy Beverley !"

"David Ferrier !" she repeated, with playful mimicry. The tinge of coquetry, childlike, but just perceptible in her tone, helped him, or the fit that possessed him—fit of happy inspiration or insensate folly—to proceed composedly.

"Lord Otho Dodbrooke has asked me to go round the world with him in his yacht."

"You, David ?" The naive surprise of the interjection was indifferently flattering to Lord

Otho's chosen companion. But sensitive personal vanity had been drubbed out of David betimes by his three brilliant sisters.

"To make myself useful, you know. He means to publish his log-book, and wants a draughtsman to take sketches for the illustrations. A two years' cruise, Amy."

"Poor David! What a tempting offer for you! What a prospect!" she laughed softly, irresistibly (he was the very worst sailor of her acquaintance).

"I shall get over that," said David stolidly, "in less than two years."

"David! Then do you mean that you are actually going?" Some feeling—emphatic surprise and disappointment—verging on consternation, the idea of this had aroused.

"I am thinking of it," he replied.

As a fact, he had declined the offer point-blank, and never dreamt for a moment of accepting it till just now, when, as by a tardy inward illumination, it had suddenly been borne in upon him what he must do. Lord Otho had asked if he knew of "some artist fellow" to recommend, since he couldn't come himself. David had only to offer to be that artist fellow—say he had changed his mind.

Amy sighed profoundly. "It will be dread-

ful, very dreadful here without you, David. A society of retired coastguardsmen and glorified grocers. What will become of mother and of me? I feel as if we should be drawn bit by bit into sipping grog in the evenings, and coming down to breakfast in silk brocade and several gold bracelets, and reading the *Sunday at Home*, and nothing else. Must you really, *really* go?"

Only a slender, soft-haired, sweet-voiced girl; and for a moment David had seen plainly, as it were by daylight, the abject thralldom in which she held him, and his masculine self-respect rebelled.

Ah, the day, three years ago now, when she walked into the Art School at Bexeter, where David, to the contemptuous disgust of his family, was scrimping in a poky lodging, for the pleasure of working twelve hours a day at his easel. He saw her now, in the fantastic simplicity that characterized her, in her quaint-fashioned print dress and sun-bonnet, as she walked valiantly through two rows of staring art-students, up to the gray-bearded, professor, saying, "If you please, I want to learn to draw here"; and when informed that the school was exclusively male, "What a shame! How unfair!" she exclaimed impulsively, with such heartfelt indignation that everybody felt of a

sudden what a shame it was. Then as on investigation it turned out that there was no written rule excluding the fair, who in Bexeter had so far shown no excessive anxiety to share the privilege, Miss Beverley, was admitted. Soon the whole school were talking of her wonderful talent. She had a curious facility ; and a proficiency in water-color that impressed her masters with marvel : there they could teach her little ; but she had never learnt to draw at all. It was in the simple, daily, boy-and-girl comradeship thus brought about that David's intercourse with her had sprung up. A year later she and her mother had settled at Orestone, within two miles of Lannacombe Hall, David's home up the valley.

Here, sixteen miles from a railway station, the dearth of general society had left the field wide open to him and almost undisputed, at Sunnyside. Mother and daughter had pleasantly accustomed themselves to have the lad for their familiar house-friend, their constant visitor, as faithful and as indispensable in his appearances at their door as the postman, and as content, outwardly, with the particular capacity in which they were always welcome.

"I shall certainly go, Amy," he said with a

rigid determination, "unless you—unless you tell me not."

Her look was dreamy, sad, and regretting; David needed no extraordinary penetration to read her thoughts, word for word.

"You are all like that—men—so selfish. Why cannot we stay as we are? I have enjoyed the talks, the walks, the sketching and studying days together; I have never enjoyed anything so much. Now you say it must all come to an end."

And his countenance, though little eloquent, answered her—

"Les jours se suivent, et ne se ressemblent pas."

"Amy"—David, the undemonstrative, the diffident, the painfully reticent, was speaking now with a fluency and dreadful earnest so unlike himself that it jarred on the girl like a miracle, a thing that does not happen—"if, say, we are to part, I know nothing of what will befall me in the years to come, but I do know this, that nobody on earth can ever bring into my life what you have brought, be to me what you are, and will remain as long as I last. I may love, I may marry, but neither sweetheart nor wife will usurp the place you have taken—your place apart."

Such a place, he felt sure, is never twice taken in a man's lifetime. Love again like that? David was persuaded he could as possibly have become a Jew or a Turk.

There was no name for it, though. Affection, passion, adoration—ay, and a crowning something that hallowed it as unique. She, to him, was an inspiring creative influence that quickened his intelligence, kindled imagination, impassioned his human self into the service of the spiritual. Mated, wedded, to the fairest and best, it seemed to him that if Amy had beckoned to him he must have come.

"David!" she let fall appealingly, the faltering in her voice now, as though his earnestness had found its way to her heart, sent up hope with a bound, and he went on adventurously:

"As for the rest, you know what I am—a painter whose works for some time yet can bring him no fame and only a poor living. You and I have always wondered together how people we know can spend all the days of their life in occupations they hate, just for the sake of being able to say to themselves they are rich in the evenings. But if, for your mother's sake or your own, Amy, you desired it—thought it best—I would strip my studio to-morrow, make a bonfire of my brushes and canvases, and ask my

father for that place in the works, which, as you know, he so cordially despises me for ever refusing."

No such mighty sacrifice, you might sneer, for an unsuccessful amateur, of doubtful talent. But Amy knew her friend; she knew how his soul loathed business, as one wholly indifferent to its objects; how it clave to his cherished pursuits, and a certain way of life that pertained to them. Perhaps her keener perceptions had gauged his artistic powers with cruel accuracy, but she was too tender-hearted to admit it; and his likings and ideals were noble and had her perfect sympathy. Her eyes, her best beauty, were soft and moist as she answered him with sweet and emphatic conviction.

"No, David: I should never ask that. It would not be right; nor right of you to consent to it."

She paused musingly and long, longer than his boyish impatience could bear.

"What then?" he asked in a muffled voice.

Amy looked graver than he had ever seen her look.

"Can you wait?" she said, tremulously.

"Like Jacob, seven years, or twice seven, with hope for a stop-gap."

"Till poor Rachel has grown an old maid and

a scarecrow," she said, trying to laugh. "No, David; say three days. I want to think. I see now—I have been selfish, I have been so happy in our old friendship."

It was old, for it was over; she had become passionately dear to him; sincerity forbade her to shirk his perfect meaning. Taken by surprise, something in her hesitated to dismiss him; an approach as un hoped for by his reason as a peep of heaven, and causing in him such tumultuous beatings of heart as knocked the words from his lips, the thoughts from his head, as he watched the lustrous bloom on her transparent cheek come and go, the wistful tremor of the soft little mouth, the eyes of strange golden-brown tint, like her hair; and full of light, like some undiscovered precious stone.

"Amy, you mad girl, to stand like that in the heavy dew!"

It was Mrs. Beverley, who had come in again, unnoticed by one or the other, and so concerned to see her delicate daughter, with her light dress and bare neck, exposed to a draught of night air that she saw nothing else. David refastened the window, taking some time about it, then joined the others by the table.

"Such a sad story," Amy's mother was saying. "A poor seaman of color, who has missed

his ship and is quite destitute and almost starving. He speaks English a little, and I gave him enough money to take him on to the Sailors' Home at Plymouth. Was not that the best thing to do, Amy?"

"The best thing? The only thing," replied Amy with great decision, but quite at random.

"Good-bye, Mrs. Beverley," said David, rising abruptly, "I've got to be home early to-night."

CHAPTER II.

THE MAN OF THE MOUNT.

DAVID started on his two miles walk home in rampant spirits. Being constitutionally of a depressed habit, which his daily surroundings acted to promote, the touch of elation slightly intoxicated him, as might a draught of alcohol your water-drinker.

"Wait," Amy had said. But her tone, though troubled, had betrayed a totally unexpected yielding, a wistful and tender impulse at whose revealing down-trodden aspiration had shot up in him ripe and strong. She was true-hearted, and incapable of trifling deliberately with another's earnest. She had been startled out of the dreamy irresponsibility of maidenhood to find herself, whether she wished it or not, with the future of a man in her hands. He had offered to revoke his plan of life at her bidding; to put away certain ideas—faiths—he had conceived and stuck to at the cost of parental approval and support, domestic quiet, pecuniary

interest, and social prospects ;—of every advantage, in short, that he possessed, and some said of filial duty besides—the only manifestation of character he had ever given; a troublesome obstinacy whose collapse would be viewed at home with careless complacency, as the passing of a distemper.

Only Amy could comprehend. She knew it was as if he had offered to put out his eyes—no less. Who can tell what honest, conscientious David would have consented to that night with Amy's hand for the lure?

That renegade sacrifice she repudiated. Then if united—suppose it, David—what flawless felicity would be yours? Her natural likings responded deliciously to his own. The boisterous gaiety, the frankly material indulgence sought after as the things that really make life worth living by his smart sisters, delighted her more delicate flesh and spirit little or not at all. But like himself, and unlike Eveleen, Lalla, and Barbara, Amy Beverley had the keenest enjoyment and perception of beauty, in nature, in art; she had thought and intelligence that found their gratification in choice companionship and congenial work. About her special gift there could not be two opinions. Deep down in him was the suspicion that she dis-

believed in his. It irked him at this moment, in his fool's paradise, as the peas did the poor princess on her bed of down. But give him time and a fair field, and he would show her. David's modesty laid claim to no genius beyond what is implied by an inexhaustible capacity for taking trouble, trouble made pleasure by a bent so strong as, though in itself no proof of power, has sometimes been known to develop it.

Add Amy to his sorry life and it becomes beautiful—ideal. From their abode, however lowly, they two would look with pity—with envy never—on their *bourgeois* neighbors, wearing out their lives in trying to add to their goods, whilst letting their good go by eternally. Here at Orestone, with a store of beauty around them that cost nothing, his daily labor a delight, and with Amy to love and live for, then would he do himself justice, vindicate his disputed vocation by succeeding in it. His portrait of Amy, his wife, should first call attention to the artist-signature "D. Ferrier"; Amy as he had seen her the other day, standing under the gray stone garden wall, against a background of dark ilex foliage, with a tangle of china roses overhead, their pink petals strewn all over her glittering hair and white

dress. He saw his immortal work distinctly hung on the line in the Royal Academy, the portrait of the year.

Malvolio's day-dreams, food for derision to the Sir Tobies, are not a whit more ludicrous than yours or mine, the dreams that are never overheard.

So David went, "a contemplative idiot," in truth, down the winding road every inch of which was so familiar to him that he could have walked it straight in his sleep. First past the silent, flower-scented, invisible villa gardens, whose high stone walls lined both sides of the roadway, each with its narrow little foot-bridge, wreathed in creepers, slung across. The last of these left behind, he emerged into the night loneliness of the country road beyond, where the harbor lengthened and narrowed between wild hills to the still distant bar. That dusky object on the scar of low broken rock, flush with high-water mark, was the ruin of the old fort; hence he skirted a sea-creek, where the black trunks of a submerged forest stood aslant and ghostlike out of the slime left by the retreating tide

A narrow wooded promontory of broken rock that rose at this point, creating two small inlets, known as the North and the South Scar

respectively, was occupied by the Mount, a pleasure-box and grounds, many years vacant and on the local auctioneer's list. The private road through, past the house, offered a short cut that David was used invariably to take, to spare himself the stiff bit of hill, where, behind the enclosure, the highway rose and fell. Mechanically he passed through the lodge-gates, forgetful of what he had heard: that the Mount quite recently had found a tenant, who might any day arrive to take possession.

A plantation of beeches and firs cast a heavy shade over the approach to the house, whose principal entrance was here at the back; the front was towards the rock-built garden, laid out Orestone fashion, in terraces overhanging the sea. David, coming up the drive in a brown study, never noticed a solitary light that gleamed faintly through a lower window.

He was rudely reminded of the rights of private ownership by a watchdog slumbering in the porch, but that waked at the trespasser's footstep on the gravel, bounded out and objected to his progress. To a sensitive ear its growl sounded nasty, but the gate of exit David wanted to reach was now close at hand; he quickened his steps towards it, but the dog was quicker. With a rush it was after and

upon him, seizing his coat between its teeth. David, startled, irritated, and prone as a man of slight stature and constitutional timidity to use valor and not discretion, persisted, resisted, incensing, without shaking off, the zealous animal. He flourished his walking stick, and inopportunately dropped it.

As he stooped to pick it up the dog flew at his hand and tore it as it had torn his coat. With a savage exclamation of pain and rage David turned with murderous intent upon his foe, but it had disappeared. The figure of a man with a lantern was shadowed in the recess of the now opened hall door.

"Be so good as to call your dog off," said David, angrily, but not to the purpose, for already an inaudible whistle, an imperceptible gesture from its master, had brought the wild beast with a bound to his side, where it crouched like a sheep.

"Who are you, and what's your business here?" demanded the Man of the Mount, curtly, but uncertainly, as he descried the extremely inoffensive looking person of the youthful intruder.

Furious, but, as usual, with his vehement sentiments tame and lame in expression, he replied: "I am David Ferrier. I have crossed

these grounds a hundred times. I should have remembered that the Mount was inhabited, but, upon my word, sir, you might find some other way of warning off trespassers than by leaving that dog of yours at large."

"Did she bite you?" asked the addressed, with the exasperating imperturbability peculiar to the owners of ferocious household pets. "Sorry for that—but really, sir—come here to the light and let me see." Then, as David, still boiling with inward wrath, declined his attention with a gesture and was stalking off, the other interposed in the tone of the natural authority of his elder in years and experience. "Now don't be a fool, my lad. Your hand, here. If it wants looking to, the sooner the better."

Horrid visions of hydrophobia—lockjaw—besieged David's over-lively imagination. His interlocutor's manner did not displease him: and, after all, though innocent, he, the night-loiterer, was in the wrong. Before he could make up his mind, the other had shouldered Master Hesitation through the portico into the hall, shutting the door, and was examining the wound by the light of his lantern.

"Ah, I see. Whew! Madge—you little shark!" (David could have sworn to a sort of

admiring satisfaction underlying his concern). "You'll be left-handed for the next day or two; but why the devil must you——. Come, sit down, and I'll doctor that for you on the spot."

"Are you a surgeon, then?" asked David, stiffly.

"Well, I'll engage I have set more broken limbs and dressed more cuts than any saw-bones in Orestone, or even in Bexeter. I've been my own medical man all my life, and that of a whole nation more than once. I've seen uglier wounds than this," and he laughed. "It's only a scratch." He left him for a moment, setting down the lantern. By the dim light David peered round the hall; its ten years' bareness broken barely and provisionally by a plain deal table and a couple of chairs. Maps, charts, and plans of boats, pinned to the wall and strewn the table, reminded David that he had heard that the new tenant of the Mount was a retired planter from the South Seas.

He now reappeared with a candle, and David first clearly beheld his man—a tall, strongly built figure, with the force that is almost grace of trained activity. The physiognomy, remarkable as a whole, lost significance if taken feature by feature, and beyond that he had a reddish-colored beard and keen,

light-blue eyes. David would have been puzzled afterwards to describe it. His speaking voice had a striking resonance, and his manner, though blunt, the distinction of superior force and independence.

He washed the blood from David's hand; treated the wound with caustic, and bandaged it with a celerity and skill that would have done credit to a qualified practitioner.

"There," said he; "you've no need to call on M. Pasteur, or to worry. It'll heal up in a couple of days. You're pale, my lad. Here," and he took something from a cupboard in the wall, "drink a glass of this with me as part of the treatment." He poured out two bumpers of a generous liquid—David's father's cellar did not contain the like—and by-and-by behold the injured victim sitting over the table, in friendly convivial chat with the author of the mischief, won over to a kind of interest in him. The adventure was ending more agreeably than it had begun.

"Madge's being loose was an accident," her master explained. "We had a tramp here just now prowling round, who frightened my caretaker out of her wits. A black man or the devil, she told me. Black or white, I didn't think it worth coming out to look; but it so

happens that I have a large sum of money on the premises, and no servant sleeping in the house, so I told her she might loose the dog, and as soon as he saw her undo the chain he showed his heels. That was only half-an-hour ago, and I let Madge run for a bit, lest he or his mates should have a fancy to return. Orestone goes early to bed, and one doesn't look out for genteel visitors at this hour of the night."

David bethought him how Mrs. Beverley's purse had had to make amends to the vagrant for Madge's teeth.

"Ferrier, did you say your name was? The son of the engineer at Queensbridge?" David assented. "He's to build me a launch," the speaker continued, "and till she's ready will lend me one of his own, the *Gossamer*. I expect her round to-morrow. But I daresay you know all this better than I."

"I am not in the business," said David, explaining that that privilege belonged to his elder brother, who was married, and lived near the works at Queensbridge up the creek.

"What's your occupation, then?"

"I am an artist—a painter."

The Man of the Mount looked across at him, and David was instantly aware that had his

reply been, "I knit stockings," his opposite neighbor would have held him in greater respect. Possibly the South Sea Islander was not quite clear in his mind what an artist was; and then it would be quite impossible for David to enlighten him.

"Well, I suppose you can afford to be what you like," he remarked, in polite allusion to the large boatbuilding and other allied business done by "Ferrier & Son." In his bluff sailor-like way he was doing his best to atone for his dog's ill-manners.

"Madge won't ever fly at you again," he said. "She knows you now."

David was heartily glad to hear it, but wished the introduction had come earlier. Madge was licking his boots; she was manifestly conscious of having blundered, and grateful at not having been made to feel the consequences. "I can't well pitch into her for a mistake made in the dark," added her owner, apologetically, "but she won't repeat it, I promise you. Another glass of this?"

David declined further toping. He had to walk home, a mile and more up the country, he observed.

"And you want to keep your head straight," laughed the other. "A good principle—my

own—and one to which I owe my success. Well, good-night, sir; it's a queer way of making acquaintance, but we didn't either of us choose it. As you see, I've only just boarded this old hulk of a house, and don't know when I shall get things ship-shape and fit for company. But perhaps you'll come out with me for a run in the *Gossamer* some day."

"Thanks," said David, vaguely, loth to forfeit that man's last rag of consideration by proclaiming his seafaring disabilities. Master and dog escorted him to the gate.

CHAPTER III.

THE NIGHT SIDE OF NATURE.

WHEN the morrow's post brought Amy a note from David to the effect that he was spending the next two days at Bexeter—his sister Eveleen wanted his escort for a fancy-fair and a dance—she smiled, as at something unwritten but understood.

Three days she had asked for, to consider. For so long he had bound himself, unasked, to refrain from pressing his suit, and trying to precipitate her decision by working on her impressionability. So he put himself out of reach of temptation. It was just like dear David.

Amy appreciated his generous motive, and his withdrawal made her think the more tenderly of her friend. She needed the interval, not, as she supposed, for reflection, but to give her sentiments, which had been pulverized by his abrupt declaration—fused as in a crucible to a shapeless mass—time to take new forms, telling

her how to act. Days she spent alone, out sketching, by the sea.

Water-color marine landscape was Amy's *forte*. At the Bexeter Art School her strange bright eyes may have had something to do with her triumphs in drawing and oil-painting, so unfeignedly believed in, nevertheless, by her master and fellow-pupils. But in these outdoor sketches from nature her gift was patent to the coldest stranger critic—a rare sense of color, a mysterious insight into the poetical aspects of nature, a quickness, a felicity in composition and handling, some experts might envy. A portfolio of her "Sea Studies," made between the ages of seventeen and two-and-twenty, had so impressed, by their promise, a connoisseur to whom they were submitted that he arranged for their private exhibition in London, where they had been the nine days' wonder and chatter of an art-clique, and bought up freely at modest prices by dealers with a shrewd eye to the Miss Beverley of the future—who had made a "boom" at twenty-two. Promise, promise! The road to Nothing is paved with golden promise.

Amy's facility itself had hindered self-improvement. She had nothing to learn, said her admirers. So much the better; for could she learn anything? Give David her quick appre-

hension, subtle artistic perception, knack of seizing and reproducing in a living way transient impressions of beauty; or give Amy his power of sedulous study and self-development, and you would have the making of an artist. But Amy saw that David's work was labored and ineffective; David that Amy's was slight and vaporous; her ambitious ventures mere fragments. Her enthusiastic industry was of a feverish kind, lacking the robust quality of endurance.

You would not have guessed it when the fit was on her, compelling her, as on this July day, to spend the long hours sketching in Heather Mill cove, three miles from Orestone; starting early to settle herself till sundown in this marine solitude, with a bun in her pocket and water in the stream there for lunch; and the silvery sand, the samphire-clad rocks, the ferny caves for company. David, whose brain was as fanciful as his person was prosaic, coming once upon her thus—a light, green-clad figure with her hair blown loose, poised on a low rock among the pools, regarding the delicate sea-flowers and burnished pebbles, the shells and cup-coral the waves washed up to her feet—would have pictured her then and there had his hand been cunning enough, as

Melusine's daughter, the earth-born sea-maid drawn mysteriously to sport with her natural element.

Five o'clock and she was still at her easel, feeling neither tired nor hungry, in her zeal for what she was about. Dissatisfied with yesterday's sketch, she had begun another she was bent on finishing; she would never get just that atmosphere again. The weather was too fine, and must be going to change, for "when things are at the best they spoil," she thought pessimistically; perhaps with a side-glimpse at a certain friendship, turned romance, as soon as ripe.

She had found the right view at last of the jutting headland, the rocky mounds rising close to the shore, bright orange with lichen growths, the giant dark mass beyond, called "Neptune's Crown," that seemed to block the mouth of the cove, but did no such thing, lying much further off than it looked; and in the foreground the little black boat moored, belonging to the farm, half-a-mile up the narrow low-wooded valley. Bold heights right and left, from whose summits you could see distinctly through the deep green transparent water the broken black masts and hull of a steamer, wrecked here a twelvemonth ago, lying "full fathom-five."

That cove was full of subjects. At last Amy paused, and stood up triumphant pleased with her handiwork. She felt she had said to a passing beauty, "Stay, for thou art fair," and it had stayed. She drew a long breath, and stepped back to contemplate her sketch, pushing her broad-brimmed straw hat from her forehead. There came a saucy gust of wind, like a mischievous elfin hand, and caught it from her head, flinging it into the sea.

"My hat!" cried Amy, darting to the waves' edge, where it floated almost at arm's length; but she could not reach it without wetting her feet. She thought she could get at it from the boat; but the tantalizing waves had carried it on, just beyond her grasp. Not to be beaten, she unmoored the boat, which floated clear, in deep water, and took the oars. Now she would get it for certain, though meanwhile the ebbing tide had swept it some distance off. Amy rowed hard, making good progress, but soon perceived she must abandon all hope of recovering her headpiece, the current having now borne it farther out to sea than she cared to venture. She felt tired already. She must push back to shore, and walk home bare-headed, like a bluecoat boy.

She turned the boat, and pulled towards the

land. Used to row about the creeks with David, she imagined herself an adept. But here, though the surface was smooth, tide and current set so strongly against her, that her efforts seemed to bring her no nearer, perceptibly, to the shore. She doubled her exertions; then her aching muscles threatened utterly to give way: her strokes grew weak and wild. She must rest her arms. To her dismay she presently perceived that she was farther, much farther, from land than when first she turned back. It spurred her to another desperate effort. Then the keel of the boat struck violently against a sunken rock, and gave her a passing scare. "It *might* have foundered," she thought, recovering herself as no sign of damage appeared. She could neither guide nor propel her craft; her repeated attempts to row merely exhausted her failing strength most fruitlessly. She saw herself slowly, steadily drifting out to sea.

She felt more perplexed than frightened by the adventure. She was in no danger. The face of the waters, though a heavy swell surged underneath—it was not so smooth here as in the cove—was fairly tranquil. Broad daylight still, and the coast so near. She summoned all her force to cry out; calling for help till

her voice failed her, the sooner for her conviction that none could hear.

The coast—she knew it well, up and down—a broken line of inaccessible, overhanging cliffs, and wild promontories indented with bays, but with scarcely a practicable descent to the shore—human life conspicuous by its absence. Those heights were so lonely, she used to say, that if by miracle you met a fellow creature, you felt as startled as by the sight of an elk or an ostrich. Heather Mill farm, the only habitation near, was well out of earshot, and the inhabitants farther, working in distant fields. She ceased her cries; they had no power—lost in the vast and widening expanse. Already she had drifted far away from the friendly little cove, oceanwards. Neptune's Crown was left behind, the shore line becoming less clear; she looked round with bewildered, scared eyes. It was the track of the Plymouth steamers; there seemed always to have been ships passing till now. She could descry white sails on the horizon, but mere distant specks these, as out of reach as the moon, and that would come no nearer.

Twilight seemed closing in very fast. By-and-by it would be dark, no hope then of a rescue till morning. A chill consternation

filled her at the thought; but as time passed it partly subsided; she schooled herself to face the worst—the coming night in an open boat at sea. If only she were not so weary and faint already! No, no, it would not come to that; before nightfall some one would see her—a fishing-boat come within hail; something *must* happen.

Something was happening already.

The face of the sea had changed—as it can change, in a few minutes, the color, the texture, the motion. It was not rough, but the waves rose, white-crested—it was going to be. The wind was fitful and unquiet; there was agitation in the elements; the boat rocked and tossed in a way that would have inconvenienced David terribly; but against that trouble Amy happened to be exceptionably proof. Clouds had come up quickly; it was their lowering that had brought on twilight prematurely; but the sun was fast sinking behind their gloom; it would not be light again. The wind blew in spurts of increasing violence; distant thunder rolled; if a storm was coming she was lost.

Desolation! She tried to pray, tried to think, but her brain reeled; then the dreadful protraction of peril gave her time to rally her

spirits, and collect herself, but the result was only to rouse a poignant despair, worse than discomfort and terror—as, though the surge menaced ominously, she was still there in the boat and not struggling, choking, in the breakers, and the acute strain relaxed. Thoughts flew through her brain that mocked her piteous isolation; thoughts of her mother and David, either of whom would have cheerfully risked their life to avert from her path the shadow of peril—the one taking tea comfortably, perhaps distressing herself that Mary-Ann had not used boiling water; the other pitying himself as a martyr, for having to attend a Bexeter ball; whilst she, Amy, their idol, chilled, exhausted, and helpless, sobbed here, a castaway, at the mercy of the wild vast sea.

Darkness thickened; now came the rain in splashes. It beat in her face, drenched her hair; the sea rose higher; great waves broke once or twice over the boat, trying to swamp it; greater ones were gathering that would succeed. Death was close at hand now—death, that she had been rather fond of musing on, in soft security. She would not, could not, believe she was in its hands, like a bird in the snare. Then after twice she had thought the boat foundering and it righted itself, she felt tempted to spring into the

flood, just to shorten this agony of dread, which must end thus. Under the pressure of unnatural excitement, she had become a stranger to herself. It was not Amy any more, the pretty, clever, adored, spoilt child; the treasure of more hearts than one; to be screened at any cost from the lightest trouble, the least want or pain. Turned to a lost, wretched, distraught, terrified bit of humanity crouching in the cockle-shell of a boat, with pall of lurid cloud descending overhead, and devouring waves eager to have her. She could not bear it; she would leap in; the struggle, the suffocation before insensibility, why go through them a thousand times in advance?

Amy staggered to her feet, but a lurch of the boat threw her back. She was bruised by the fall, and sat up half stunned; the lightning ran across the sky and the thunder rolled again, the puffs of wind growing to a veritable gale; the sea was magnificent; a monster wild animal let loose and to play; leaping, bounding—a sight for the gods.

The strength of her sensations had spent itself; she was thinking how she had despised certain possessions—David's devotion, in other words—up to the last. If some miracle should save her now, it seemed to her she must meet him in an altered spirit, glad and grateful to requite

such affection. 'Too late! It is always so.

There was a lapse; she had not swooned, and became conscious again directly, with a heart-sick, miserable consciousness, blinded by the salt spray, wet to the skin, and so benumbed with cold that she could hardly move her frozen fingers. Quailing utterly at the sight, she watched the lowering angry sky, the turgid waves—it seemed a marvel that the boat had lived so long. The next, or the next, or the next, and it would be swallowed up, and she go down like those poor souls in the steamer, their only monument, lying there black and broken. Well. But it seemed an eternity that she must cower there waiting for the end.

The still more instant horror of a dark solid object heaving out of the gloom and bearing straight down upon her boat brought her to her feet with a shriek of despair.

But the black shape had stopped as if by magic, just grazing the boat, which, caught in the wash, lurched heavily. She was thrown back, drenched and choked by a wave. It took away her breath, and made her shut her eyes. It had come—the worst—and with human voices—she had heard them—quite near. She could only stretch out her hands imploringly. There was an awful pause; she managed to

scramble to her knees ; the dark thing was close on her again ; but a light flashed from the side ; she felt the movement of her boat arrested ; a human step, a human form beside her ; strong arms lifted her up, a saving presence, to whom she clung ; those moving walls had all but engulfed her and her defender ; for an instant her senses wholly forsook her ; the next she knew she was no longer in that cockle-shell, nor alone.

The shock of deliverance overpowered her ; she could not speak or move, but she could hear. It was he who had carried her on board speaking :

“ Don't loose the boat, you idiot ! Take her in tow.”

And it struck her as so funny, so unreal, that in this (for her) superlative moment, any one should be able to think of the boat !

She was lying at the bottom of a steam launch, her head on some cushions ; she tasted something given her out of a flask, which revived her, and she sat up, quickly recovering her senses. In the darkness she could discern the forms of two men, well occupied with the management of their craft. They took no notice of her except to wrap something warm round her shoulders, and then left her to get her wits.

The sense of comparative comfort and safety was delicious. Presently one—the man, not the master—passing her, asked how she did.

“I am very well,” said Amy; then recognizing his voice, “Why, Joe Mansel, is that you?” naming one of the Orestone watermen.

“Ay, and the more fool Joe Mansel,” he growled, evidently surly at something.

“I had quite given myself over for lost,” Amy exclaimed, gratefully, “when you saved me.”

“You ain’t at home yet,” retorted Mansel. “Keep your thanks till they’re due, Miss. I wish we were in Orestone. It was mad to start back from Plymouth with such a sea as this coming on.”

From which Amy gathered that the launch itself was endangered, and the cruise critical. But things go by comparison, and for the girl the change to the roomy and steam-propelled boat, and the supporting presence of two males, one of them six feet high and as cool as a cucumber, inspired her with irrational confidence. She was feeling bold as a lion now. In the intervals of some violent tossing the mastersaid—it was too dark for them to see each other—she only knew by the voice it was not Joe Mansel :

“Are you frightened?”

"Not in the least," said Amy. "Can I be of any use? I can steer, you know."

He laughed, and she heard Joe's guffaw. Still their manner told her there was risk. The sea was too high for the little launch; progress was difficult; there was damage already; danger might arise any moment; but she had spoken the truth, she felt perfectly fearless.

CHAPTER IV.

A PARTY OF PLEASURE.

IN this solitary matter of escorting his sisters, David, the meekest of young men and of brothers, had a while ago put his foot down. *He would not.* "The worm had turned," said Barbara (the wit of the family, as Lalla was the beauty, and Eveleen the social success). There was no denying that they, the girls, had been remorseless in their encroachments on the Owlet's time and patience, things unlikely to find better employment than in fetching and carrying for this lively trio, as they took care to throw in his teeth.

So, when Eveleen's promised *chaperon* for certain Bexeter gaieties failed at the last, through the death of her mother ("Stupid old woman, she has been dying for three years; she might have lasted till after the ball," exclaimed the disconsolate fair), and David offered to shepherd this flower of the flock, there was a moment's mute surprise. But he was not given time to repent.

"David ! Well, any way's better than not going at all," thought Eveleen aloud ; "that hand of yours in sticking-plaster's not very presentable, but you can wear gloves. Off with you at once to the post-office to wire for rooms at the New London Hotel."

"Sacrifice to evil spirits," a sceptic and present-day philosopher bids us. How should Amy's young lover be less superstitious ? Subjecting himself to a disagreeable ordeal on Wednesday and Thursday, as though it somehow entitled him to hope for poetical justice on Friday at Amy's hands.

Eveleen treated the Owlet according to her wont. She had no change : Eveleen never had any change. Besides paying her travelling expenses, David must disburse for her shopping in Bexeter—sundries she had forgotten.

"I'll owe it you, David," she said, with an indefinable air. "If you have a muff for a brother, profit by the misfortune when you can," was Eveleen's principle. His shyness and masculine delicacy might be counted on not to remind her of her debts. It was a fine imposed on him for social slips remembered against him, making them all blush for the relationship. Then, after she had sent him to every livery-stable in the town to hunt up a suitable

open carriage for driving to the fancy fete at Oatlands, when, at length, he returned successful, he found she had started without him in the meanwhile, in the company of some friends she had met by chance, leaving word that he must follow, as she wanted him expressly to see her home.

That was to say that she had made her private arrangements to be driven back by a certain Captain Corydon in his dogcart, and wanted the Owlet (somehow Eveleen, in her wildest moments, never quite let go her hold on appearances) to play propriety, with his back turned to the most egregious of flirtations. He must get down to open the gates, endure the Captain's merciless persiflage, lend them his umbrella when the rain came on.

Later, see him falter into the assembly rooms, a limp, insignificant adjunct to an amazing scarlet tulle ball dress, enclosing Eveleen's plump person. Plain-faced (as she knew), the screamingly fashionable style she adopted secured for her, nevertheless, the respectful attention of both sexes. Her shape, as outlined by the drapery, if natural, would have proclaimed her a monster; her hair, frizzled by curling tongs to woolly semblance, rose like a chimney-pot on her head; her

pencilled eyebrows and lids—or other circumstance—heightedened the natural bloom on her cheek. She must have David's name on her card to choke off the bores: these fair tyrants had trained him to dance respectably before he threw off their yoke. So she twirled once round the room with him—just a hint, pointed by a glance to the right man, which brought him to her side at once, and David was hustled off with a fat *chaperon* on his arm to the supper-room. Six hours of merriment on this pattern, and if tedium were mortal, thought he, he must have given up the ghost. But all this was only the beginning of joys.

To-morrow afternoon Eveleen was going over to Oatlands to dine and stay the night, She couldn't possibly go without David, since the master of the house was a widower; but go she must. There was always such fun at Oatlands!

The fun, for David, consisted in being pilloried, so to speak, by vivacious belles, strong in practical jokes, and who knew a butt when they saw one; sewed placards on his coat, put a wasp in his pocket, and a key down his back; in the spectacle of Captain Corydon wheeled along the terrace in a perambulator, then Eveleen was induced to get in, and sat on

his knee, under which double and considerable burden the vehicle collapsed. Then an interval of repose in the billiard-room, enlivened by mysterious witticisms and echoes of the music-halls, Eveleen taking nips of brandy, and joining in some circus-like trials of gymnastics—fit prelude to an after-dinner dance, where ordinary waltzes, falling flat, were succeeded by a quadrille extraordinary, the dancers' antics waxing wilder and wilder, till shrieks of laughter drowned the music, the night frolics winding up with a prodigious romp, a scouring of passages, bombarding of doors, and freaks of furniture. Some playful being had locked David out of his room, and hidden the key. Now the rout, disappearing as by enchantment, left him astray in the corridor, to wander or go to sleep on the sofa in the billiard-room, till six in the morning, when a compassionate housemaid came down and contrived to procure him the means of entrance to his apartment.

"Good Lord!" ejaculated Eveleen's brother, as the pair drove off together next morning in a fly. "So that's over."

"Didn't you appreciate it?" asked Eveleen, placidly. "I thought not."

David burst out laughing. "I say, Evey, if

I were a young lady, I think I should draw the line at a high kick competition and a can-can."

"What, were you shocked, old lady?" she said, faintly amused. "Oh, it's nothing, they say, to what goes on at Lord and Lady Otho's, at Upton Court."

She said it as seriously as though quoting Church and State sanction for whatever was implied.

That Eveleen, in her frisky virginity, was none the less qualifying for the stiffest and staunchest of British matrons was a seeming paradox, but a fact that dawned on David later on.

At home, meanwhile, sat Lalla and Barbara, thirsting with eagerness for their sister's return from her outing. Their faces dilated as she came in, brimful of gossip, which while the tea was drawing, rippled over in emphatic little snatches.

"Yes, Lady Otho *did* come—sold everything off her stall, even the safety-pins, at absurd prices; and what do you think at the end *they raffled for a kiss*, at a guinea a ticket, and cleared fifty! You should have seen the men's faces as they drew; but there was cheating, I know; of course Captain Corydon won—

trust her for that. At the ball she wore oyster-white, with perfect cataracts of lace, and knots of heart's-ease sprinkled about ; he danced with her three times, but he thinks her *passee*, he told me so."

"Give me some tea," said David, as Eveleen paused for breath, whereupon Barbara, as she handed him his cup, parenthetically let fall—

"Oh, David, have you heard about Amy?"

"What about Amy?" he said, looking up quickly.

"How she went to sea 'in a sieve,' or something foolish, and was picked up by *Gossamer*, half-drowned in a leaky boat."

"Nonsense, Vava. Amy! What on earth do you mean?" he stammered, incredulously. "Are you in earnest?" Alas! her attention was now reft away beyond recall. The servant had just entered with a local paper, and three pairs of fair hands were fighting feverishly for its possession. Barbara's prevailed. Grasping the priceless sheet, she tore it open with frantic avidity. David really thought the three of them had gone mad. There was a wild scramble to see, as they searched the columns for the desired heading, "*The Regatta Ball!*" and here Barbara shrieked aloud. "*It's in, Evey, it's in*, and rapturously read out, "Miss

Ferrier was conspicuous in a robe of a fashionable color, 'Feu d'Enfer,' with a gold—Oh, you horrid, horrid Owlet" as her brother nipped the newspaper from her hands, and held it behind him, saying, loudly, "First finish your sentence, Vava, about Amy. What do you say has happened?"

"Amy—oh, well, what was I saying? You've put it out of my head," and she halted—provoked and provoking—but her yearning to recover the society journal prevailed. "It's all true, David," she said fretfully. "She drifted out to sea in a boat, and was taken up more dead than alive. I don't know the particulars. But she's all right; there's no tragedy; don't waste your heroics. Ah, Joy!" As he flung down the newspaper. Instantly her hands had snatched it up, and she was finding her place.

"*How* many times did you say he danced with her, Evey?"

The door banged on her brother as she spoke.

"I do believe said the graceless Evey, "that he's gone tearing off to the Beverleys. He can wake up, it appears. You wouldn't have thought so at Oatlands last night."

David went at full speed down the valley. Barbara's reports of facts were apt to be devious;

still he gathered that Amy must really have been in some danger, whilst he was fooling it at Oatlands! He accomplished the two miles in some twenty minutes. The house looked as usual; the servant's cheerful face contradicted all apprehensions; but he noticed a man's hat in the hall—possibly the doctor's.

In the sunny drawing-room three persons were sipping tea, as serenely as the smart virgins he had just left.

But for Mrs. Beverley's altered face, David would have decided that Barbara had been hoaxing him. Amy's mother was suffering physically from the fright she had undergone, whose traces made her look quite old to-day. You would have thought it was she who had experienced the narrow escape, not Amy, who, with the buoyancy of twenty-two, sat there, rather pale and tired, but as bright-eyed and animated as David's solicitude could desire. The third person was his acquaintance of the other night—The Man of the Mount.

"Here's David," said Amy, springing up as though she were expecting him. "David, this is Mr. George Elliston, but for whom I should be—somewhere far out on the Atlantic," she added, cheerfully. "I see you have heard all about it—how he picked up me and my boat, adrift." She

spoke as if it were an every-day occurrence.

"Not how you came to be boating by yourself, Amy."

She told her tale, making light of all, as though retrospectively to soothe her mother. Poor Mrs. Beverley had suffered many things in her woman's life, but never as yesterday, when it grew dark and she anxious; for Amy, who was timid, never stayed out so late. At last she sent messengers with lanterns to meet her. One pushed on to Heather Mill cove—found her easel overturned, her possessions scattered about, the cliff path unsafe in the high wind, and brought back this intelligence. Some black and interminable hours of nameless anxiety and horrid presage followed; then, towards midnight, there was a knock—a waterman sent up from the harbor to say that the *Gossamer* had just come in with Miss Beverley on board, unhurt, but in an exhausted condition.

"But I walked up from the pier," said Amy. "Did I not, Mr. Elliston? Could you only have seen me, David, and what wind and wet had made of me—a sort of attenuated, draggle-tailed banshee."

"What is really strange," remarked Mrs. Beverley, who kept watching her with fond uneasiness, "is that she does not seem any

the worse for the wetting, the chill or the fright."

"Miss Beverley did not seem to me frightened at all," observed Elliston, speaking for the first time.

"Well, I knew I had some courage somewhere," said Amy, "but I could not find it till I was in a seaworthy boat. I did not feel the danger after that. Still I was glad when I saw the Orestone lights."

"And so was I," Elliston admitted. "Your father," he added, to David, "will forgive me for having risked and slightly damaged his boat in too heavy a sea, returning from a run to Plymouth, since it was the means of getting this young lady out of what might have proved a serious scrape. I must wish you good-day now, Mrs. Beverley."

"We shall see you to-morrow," she said friendly, as they shook hands. Elliston looked straight at David, appearing to divine his position as an adopted member of the household.

"These ladies are so good as to say they will come and advise me as to the furnishing of my house. I have lived the life of a gypsy since I was fourteen, and have not the slightest idea how you set about settling down. Perhaps you will come also to join the council?"

David consented politely, as he saw him out.

"Who is Mr. Elliston?" he inquired when he returned to the drawing-room:

"A planter from the Pacific Ocean," said Amy. "He has spent most of his life out there."

"And made his fortune," concluded her mother.

Those three could read each other's thoughts fluently. Mrs. Beverley resumed:

"He makes no pretension to be a gentleman, in the common sense of the word. I fancy he must be entirely self-educated. But he saved her life. I feel as if there was nothing I would not do to show my gratitude."

"He and Joe Mansel," said Amy. "Joe held the boat, I believe, while Mr. Elliston got me over the side. That was the worst moment of all; I thought we must go down together." She broke off. "I shall like to see what he will make of the Mount with his belongings from the tropics—shells and strange birds and poisoned arrows, and perhaps he may introduce us to a swarthy wife—a savage island queen. But he hasn't mentioned her."

CHAPTER V.

DAVID GETS HIS ANSWER.

DAVID had rung twice at the Mount without reply. Only Madge, chained up, but fawningly friendly to-day, barked as in excuse. Hearing voices in front of the house, David walked round to the garden whence they came. This was laid out in three terraces, rising one above the other on a rocky platform, with the sea welling round its base. On the upper walk he found Mrs. Beverley, alone.

"Amy and Mr. Elliston are there," she said, pointing to their figures on the terrace below, where a large telescope was set up. "You want to join them—— Stay a moment," for David, with alacrity, was availing himself of the implied leave to desert her.

He obeyed; but she seemed already to have forgotten what she wanted to say. The voices of the two below sounded clearly. Elliston was busy adjusting the telescope.

"A shoal of porpoises!" he announced, with sudden excitement.

"Where, where? Let me look," said Amy's voice.

Here Mrs. Beverley let fall low and significantly :

"David—Amy has told me——" and David's lover's heart flamed with expectation—hope and dread so mingled as to be indistinguishable.

"I see nothing," said Amy, distinctly. "Were you hoaxing me?"

"Excuse me; you have got it out of focus. Try now."

"Well?" said David, consumed with impatience, as Mrs. Beverley relapsed into silence.

"Remember, a mother's wishes count for nothing in those matters," she began, hurriedly, "nor is a mother's judgment infallible. Still, I think—I *think*, David—she cares for you."

Her tone bespoke a stress of feeling that matched his own. He looked at her worn, sadly expressive, but still handsome countenance, in naive wonder. David, the adopted brother, had always found her kindness itself, but he had fully expected that David, the suitor and the nobody—a man bringing nothing to the proposed *menage* but his hat to hang up in the hall—must awake the woman of the world in her, to protest against the defeat of her

maternal ambition. Their eyes met, and from hers there flashed a message of sympathetic comprehension: it was there for him in the older woman, whether or not present in the younger.

"Yes, I think it," she repeated, anxiously. "God grant it may be so!"

"Amen!" sang out David in his soul. "So you don't think me a presumptuous, preposterous fool?" he faltered, reddening.

"Now I see them!" cried Amy. "There is a white one among them. Look, Mr. Elliston."

"I have only one wish in life," Mrs. Beverley was saying, "but my life hangs upon it—Amy's happiness. I would die to assure it; to see her forfeit it would kill me. And to think I can do nothing—nothing; that my hand is helpless, except for harm!"

Of poor Mrs. Beverley's history, the key to her painful speech, David knew something, and might guess the rest. She had made a love match, and been left a widow early, under circumstances which almost forbade her to mourn her bereavement. Whatever she had suffered, from more than common, swift, and unsparing disillusion, she had suffered in silence, behaved admirably, and let the adoring devotion to

which her nature inclined grow again round her daughter, whom she idealized as once she had idealized her father. He had, at least, left her this fairy child, with a face like a poet's dream—a girl who lent to the game, the lesson, the walk, the meal, where she was present, a zest and a spark. And now that the lovely Amy was grown up, Mrs. Beverley thought of herself at two-and-twenty, and life, as she had imaged it, committing herself fearlessly to its keeping—an image which she had found like the Iron Virgin of old—all sharp knives within, to stab those thrust into its embraces.

"White? Upon my word, so he is. I think I'll have a shot at him."

"Oh, don't shoot him," said Amy, instantly. "However, you couldn't possibly hit at this distance."

"Not?" said Elliston, turning to get his rifle, which hung in a recess in the terrace wall.

"Never," returned Amy, "unless your weapon were enchanted."

"Love," said Mrs. Beverley, smiling sadly, "is a lure, like the false fires lit by the wreckers to draw sailors on the rocks; but not love like yours, David. You can be passionate in unselfish good-will. I see it in a thousand little things no one else would notice. I believe you

would prove it, if need were, though Amy were married to another."

"I could," said David, confident and heroic.

"More than that," continued Mrs. Beverley, with a touch of bitterness, "you could be constant in your enthusiastic kindness, though you had her for your wife."

Two low earnest voices whispering, two disturbed faces bent near together—it might have been a love scene going on on the upper terrace—the bang of the rifle made them start.

"Missed!" cried Elliston with keen disgust.

"No," said Amy, who was at the telescope, "they have all dived but one—the white one; it is floating there—it is dead. Mr. Elliston, how cruel!—how could you kill it?"

"Well, I have done now, you can go to her," said Mrs. Beverley; but already Amy was hastening up the steps from the walk below, Elliston following.

She gave her hand to David, saying hurriedly to her mother:

"We must be going. I had forgotten about my girls' sewing class at six. I promised Mrs. Churchstow faithfully to be there."

"Do tell me how to make peace with Miss Beverley," said Elliston, appealingly, "she has

quarrelled with me for knocking over a white-backed porpoise."

"It was wantonly cruel," said Amy, "and you oughtn't. But"—she hesitated—"it was all my fault, for I dared you to—I—I—wanted you to shoot."

They all laughed at the generous confession.

"May I hope," said Elliston as they walked together to the lodge-gates, "that you and Mrs. Beverley will repeat this visit when I have got the place presentable? Just now it is like Crusoe's desert island when first he got there."

Said Amy, silyly, "I have been looking about all the while for Man Friday, and am quite disappointed that he has not shown his face."

"Oh, as to that," said Elliston, devoutly, "I promise you when I get my servants, they shall be white ones."

"Oh, mamma," said Amy, suddenly, "that poor black sailor you gave money to the other night, do you know I am afraid he spent it at the Turk's Head in the usual way? He was locked up for disorderly conduct that very evening—I saw it in the paper—and has gone for six weeks to Bexeter jail."

"The same, no doubt, who came prowling round here," said Elliston, "but Madge warned him off."

"I am afraid he told stories," said Amy, "but he was hungry and knew that if he told us the truth—that he had tried to rob a sailor at Plymouth, and was running away,—we should have shut the door in his face."

Mr. Elliston laughed aloud. "Well, after all," he remarked, frankly, "I seem to myself in something very like his position at Orestone—a vagabond and a stranger. It is most kind of you ladies to take me on trust, like the nigger; but I hope to repay your charity better."

They took leave of him smilingly at the lodge. Elliston walked David back to the house. "Can't I persuade you to stop and dine with me," he said pleasantly: "I think there's some sort of a meal under weigh indoors."

David, who never lost an opportunity of shirking the family dinner, where he seemed to eat his bread in an atmosphere of tacit reproach—as one of the unemployed, a despised incubus—accepted readily, as also the cigar of prime quality with which Elliston supplied him.

"My goodness!" was David's simple comment, "my father would give any price for this brand."

"Very likely," said Elliston, dryly, "but he couldn't get it. These came to me in a round,

about way ; I have only a few left. You may be sure they never paid duty at the Customs ; but that won't spoil their taste for you, I take it."

He had stopped before the house to look in through the kitchen windows, remarking :

"It strikes me that my cook and caretaker has levanted. She's the wife of the keeper at the cottage by the South Scar, and has a child with whooping-cough—a license for neglecting me and her work when she wants to. And I've asked you to dinner! No, I'll not let you off, sir. I've dined alone till I'm sick of it."

David civilly suggested dining together somewhere in the town.

"None of your tripe-shops," said Elliston, disgustedly. "Will you step with me into the kitchen? Humph! She hasn't taken the beef-steaks with her, that's a comfort; *I'll* cook them." His eyes rested on the black hearth, "But not here—an empty house is a comfortless, damp hole. By your leave we'll dine out of doors, and we may as well have our kitchen fire there too."

Under a rock that cropped out from the soil on an unreclaimed strip of ground bordering the garden, Elliston kindled the fire, feeding it with fir-cones and dry sticks from the plantation

close by. David, remembering futile efforts of his own of the sort at picnics, looked on, impressed by the dexterity shown in this simple art by his companion.

"And now while it burns up," said Elliston, "we'll try our luck with a line. That's the beauty of this house; you can catch your dinner, so to speak, almost out of your drawing-room window."

They descended to the lowest terrace overhanging the sea, deep and calm underneath. Elliston had his fishing-tackle ready.

"I admire the patience of your men here," he said, "going out, cold night after cold night, in a nasty sea, for the sake of perhaps coming home again with a string of six mackerel. I wonder they stand it."

"Orestone must seem tame to you in every respect," observed David.

"Well, I've yet got to make its acquaintance. tell me about those ladies who have just left. They're kind—but I don't know how far I'm warranted in taking advantage of the accident of picking Miss Beverley up at sea, as an introduction to society that might otherwise give me the cold shoulder, as not of its class. My father was a small farrier at Plymouth," he stated candidly.

"Mrs. and Miss Beverley are very liberal in

their ideas," David told him. "As for their neighbors, every one,—from the banker and the vicar down to the gingerpop seller,—they would as soon part with the nose on their face as with their class distinctions; but," he concluded viciously, "I think you will everywhere find 'the Master of the Mount' is introduction enough."

Elliston questioned him about different people. David's line meanwhile dangled and jerked purposelessly, whilst his companion's seemed bewitched, bringing in three whiting in no time.

Whilst David fetched bread and platters from the house, Elliston prepared, cooked, and served the fish with great care and perfection. No formal hospitality could so well have hit his young guest's fancy as this extemporized open-air repast; David was discovering that you never get your food really hot, or relish it properly in a close dining-room—half-a-mile from the cooking range—with a footman behind your chair, whose patronizing contempt for "Master David" transpires in his way of taking away your plate.

Now Elliston was busy with the beefsteaks. The process was simple, he cut two spits of wood with his knife, upon which the steaks, impaled and twisted round, were set to broil over the

glowing embers; no dishing up allowed when ready for serving. From the same spit of wood struck upright into the sod before him, he sliced the meat with his knife, with a deftness David vainly tried to imitate.

"That's what they call a 'Thieves' Roast,'" said Elliston, laughing at his gingerly awkwardness. "It does well enough in the backwoods, but one must do at home as the home-birds do. I'll write to-night to Prunella's, the house-furnishers at Plymouth, and put the place in their hands to trim up. Then, sir, I'll ask you to dinner again."

"I don't know but what I prefer this way."

"Right you are, my lad! I used to think I'd sooner be a Solomon Island savage than lead the life under glass of some of you Old Englanders; then lately it struck me I might take kindly to civilization, even to vegetating, if only for a change."

"Is it long since you left this country?" asked David. The other's manner seemed to invite questions.

"As soon as I was old enough to think for myself, I saw my father's business offered no prospect whatever to a lad of spirit, so I preferred to shift for myself—jumped into the water to learn to swim. It's hard, but it's wholesome.

Necessity is the mother of resource, with me, any way. I went to sea at fifteen, and served under one or two master devils, but brushed along until I got a barque of my own. I've known the ups and downs incident to a sea-merchant life. As for instance, when my trusted mate decamped with my ship and cargo—the Lord knew where—I didn't, till two years after, when he had his throat cut by a nigger, who was caught and confessed the pranks they two had been up to together. These last years I've prospered fairly well, and I asked myself if it wasn't the right moment to retire—I don't think many more fortunes will be made in the beach-combing trade. I had a curiosity to see England again, and last month I came over. My family are still remembered at Plymouth, but removed long ago to London, where, on inquiry, I found that my last surviving relative, my mother, had lately died. But the old country's full of novelty for the rover that I've been, so I'm going to try settling at home. I've had the sea about me ever since I was a lad, and couldn't go far from it; but none of your fashionable watering-places for me, with lifts, and bath chairs, and asphalte walks! I heard that the Mount here was to be let for a song, as no one would live so far out of the world. Place and

price suited me to a nicety. I've got it for a year, to see how I like the experiment."

"If you want quiet, you couldn't choose better," said David. "We have few residents, and no visitors, out of the yachting season; and I could show you bits up and down the coast where you might fancy yourself in some undiscovered island in the Pacific."

"Don't you smell mushrooms?" asked Elliston of a sudden, looking about.

David could not pretend that he did; but his friend strode off on a search among the grassy mounds, returning with a handful of the savory growth, which he stewed into a delicious second course.

"Now you know all about me," Elliston resumed presently, "As you see, I can lay no claim to gentility of birth or education."

"I should never have thought it," said David. Elliston laughed at the spontaneous compliment to his good manners.

"We are not all savages out in the Pacific, sir. If you wish to acquire polish there's no lack of models to study from. I could name you some names that would make you stare, taken together with the conditions and occupations in which I have met their gentlemen owners."

"I daresay," said David. "And yet those

fellows don't really change with their longitude ; they simply throw off the mask they wore here."

Elliston regarded him with amusement, as poor David was wont to be regarded.

"It seems to me, sir, you're what they call a philosopher. How old are you? Nineteen?"

"Three-and-twenty," said David, with such dignity as he could muster.

"Not too old to have a sweet tooth left in your head," said Elliston, jumping up. "There's fruit for dessert somewhere about."

A tall cherry tree rose near; its lowest branches far out of arm's length. Elliston kicked off his boots, swarmed up the stem like a monkey, and shook down the ripe fruit into an umbrella David extended underneath to receive it.

After dessert they lay extended on the grass smoking, then patrolled the terrace, David supplying his host with such bits of information about Orestone and its inhabitants as were likely to be useful to a newcomer. His visits to Sunnyside apart, he had never spent such a pleasant evening. It was late when he left, Elliston walking with him half-way up the Lannacombe valley.

David called at Sunnyside the next day, to hear that Amy was unwell and invisible. The

exposure she had undergone had after all not spared her a bad feverish cold. On the morrow he received a note in her hand as follows :

“ MY DEAR DAVID,

“ Forgive me if I write ill and confusedly. I am better already ; but ill or well I must write to you, and I do not know how to begin.

“ I care for you, David, with all my heart—more than for any one I know. And yet you will not be satisfied with what I mean.

“ Remain, my dear comrade, my fellow-pilgrim in art—I shall not say my brother—I never had one, yet I know brothers and sisters are not friends in the same way as you and me.

“ I did not know how precious our friendship was to my poor little life till you talked of breaking it off—of leaving us. David, you must do as you think best. For I have no right to detain you, or even to ask you not to try and forget me, if you think you ought.

“ Your affectionate friend.

“ AMY.”

CHAPTER VI.

A CONQUEST.

ORESTONE "society"—some half-a-dozen families, of whom David's was a leading representative—was disappointed, nay, disgusted, upon learning the precise antecedents of the new tenant of the Mount.

The son of a mechanic, himself a sort of marine bagman, with probable connections in humble life—one more added to the dull list of seafaring nonentities and captains by courtesy that peopled the little ring of villas that had sprung up around Orestone; a creature you could not possibly "know"; who would tipple and spin yarns in the evening with those red-nosed pensioners of state; and spend the day long, planted stork-like on the pier, looking at nothing through a field-glass. Dog in the manger, to appropriate that nice house on the Scar, clearly designed to fit a social somebody! If Lord Otho, the proprietor, couldn't come there himself, his least duty was to let it to some bird of his own finer feather.

Mr. Churchstow, the vicar, who had looked in vain for Mr. Elliston's appearance among his Sunday congregation, felt in no hurry to recognize his arrival by a call. And when David's father who had conceived a respect for the newcomer as an intelligent customer, said something to his wife about asking him to dinner, adding by the way that "Elliston might or might not be a gentleman, but he knew a good deal about boats" (Mr. Ferrier was a conservative with a vein of simplicity), his better half negatived the suggestion. He returned to the charge, muttering, "Dave says he's really . . ." She cut him short with a sigh and a "David's unfortunate *penchant* for low company is nothing new."

Meanwhile, Elliston, blissfully unconscious of the conspiracy of shunning laid against him, was going quietly about the business of seeing his house made habitable. He spent freely, and one day it oozed out that he had placed the sum of ten thousand pounds to his credit in Rowley's bank at Queensbridge.

Whereupon Rowley the banker told his ladies and those whom it might concern that he, at all events, should not stand upon his social dignity any longer. He called on Mr. Elliston and asked him to dinner.

The vicar reflected that, after all, the yearly attendances at public worship of more than one local magnate on whom he depended for his charities might be counted on the fingers of one hand, and Elliston had neither wife nor daughters to send as his delegates. He might contribute to the new pews, though he never sat in them. And so it came to pass.

And the next time that old Ferrier grumbled at not being allowed to show social civility in this quarter—adding, warily, that Elliston seemed to have taken a prodigious fancy to Lord Otho Dodbrooke's yacht, *Watersprite*, now lying up at the works, for sale at a bargain; and that Dodbrooke had had Elliston over to Upton for a day's shooting, and pronounced him a capital fellow—his lady surrendered at discretion, saying, "Well dear, suppose you ask him to lunch"—a compromise.

The girls had become suddenly curious about David's South Sea Islander, and managed to find out more about him in a week than would their brother in a twelvemonth.

"He was precisely thirty-five years of age," said Eveleen; "and, having made a good deal of money on a successful cotton-plantation, had very properly come here to spend it." "He was a great admirer of beauty," said Lalla, with a

languishing air. "You can't be so deadly exclusive in this part of the country"—Barbara put it plainly—"or you'd end by seeing nothing but your own shadow." And at Lannacombe Hall, as everywhere now, Elliston met with a most hospitable reception.

His sire, the blacksmith, of whom he never made any secret, was now considerably spoken of as 'in the engineering trade'; himself as a traveller and explorer. If self-educated, he had proved his superiority as a teacher of languages, spelling and penmanship to the masters of Eton, if you judged by Ferrier senior, their ex-pupil. Elliston was an excellent judge of wine, said the latter, though he drank next to none; and the young ladies praised him heartily for never boring people with long accounts of his adventures, and hairbreadth escapes, and shipwrecks, and encounters with sharks and cannibals. He was a perfectly civilized being; and no great wonder, for it actually appeared that lawn-tennis was played in Samoa!

Nay, upon his third visit, matters had advanced so far in his favor that he became the involuntary cause of a serious family breach. Eveleen was roundly accused by her sisters of throwing herself at his head. Shameless duplicity! to decoy him out for "one moment" on

the terrace, and then whisk him off surreptitiously to the farm, monopolizing him for half-an-hour, without a hint to Lalla and Barbara, left making the tea, in momentary expectation of their return. Some home-truths were spoken. Eveleen retaliated. Had not Barbara tried to inveigle him into a correspondence about an absurd wager? and Lalla gone into such fits of admiration over a barbaric gold trinket he showed her that he was obliged to make her a present of it—since when she wore it conspicuously? .

Elliston's deportment with these young ladies was pleasant, but comparatively reticent, showing him on his guard; and David, to his keen annoyance, saw that at moments he regarded their ways with puzzled astonishment and small respect.

Since the receipt of Amy's letter, David had kept clear of Orestone altogether, and clutched hold of hard work as of a life-buoy. For a week he scarcely went out of his studio; though in his disordered mood his labors seem to serve no purpose beyond killing the daytime, and producing that great mental and bodily fatigue he instinctively sought as a counter-irritant—working till his head ached and his eyes were blind. Then, driven wild by the twanging of stringed instruments in the room underneath—his sisters

were 'studying' the banjo (" You would 'study' the comb," David told them, " if it came into fashion ")—he fled out of doors betimes. The morning dews would henceforth find him sketching far away on the wilds of Roden Down; the loneliest stretch on the many miles of desolate coast between Orestone and Plymouth—an upland waste of twisted thornbushes and stunted furze; where many rare wild flowers—burnet roses, yellow-horned poppies, and gay-colored squills—bloomed and fell unplucked; and butterflies—the marbled coronet, clearwings, and large blues—sporting unmolested by collectors. The sea and cliff views were magnificent, but seldom looked upon by human eyes; human feet shunned the uncanny solitude, fit haunt for wild-cats or pixies; where walking was rough, and at points dangerous. For the cliff, undermined by the waves four hundred feet below, had at some time suffered a landslip and fallen in; and the ground was rent by fissures of unknown depth, half concealed by the furze; openings like the shaft of a mine, descending slant-wise, and not to be sounded—local curiosities known as the Windstone Pits. But David's mood made him venturesome, as well as industrious, to excess. Sunset came and found him still at work, until forced by darkness to desist. No amount of

exposure or exhaustion seemed to produce its normal effect on his anything but robust physique. He was as insensible to their pricks as a hypnotized being. Yet it was only for three days that he had entertained the shadow of a hope that Amy could be his—let the light shine whose extinguishing had thus played the vengeance with his mind and body! Could the effect of anything so transient be lasting—everlasting?

So passed three weeks, during which he could not trust himself to see her. He fancied himself only waiting for Lord Otho's return from a visit to Scotland to ask him to renew the rejected offer of travel. But any resolve, wise or foolish, taken in his present mood would be the outcome of a mere random impulse: Some day he would be a rational being again; but that day was not yet.

Although Mr. Elliston had been so hospitably entertained, it was considered particularly nice of him when, as if desirous of acknowledging the civilities received, without waiting till his house was ready—"Doing up the Mount had proved a longer and costlier affair," said Eveleen, "than he had expected")—he extemporized a picnic party to the Glen—a rocky, heather-clad ravine, lying midway up the sea cliffs, a couple of miles from Orestone, a picturesque and

favorite resort for such expeditions. The invited guests included the clergyman and his family, the banker's wife and daughter, the Beverleys, and the whole Ferrier clan ; ladies, of course, vastly preponderating, and the bachelor element being represented by Elliston himself, Mr. Chilley, the curate, and David.

Our young friend was half way back to his sober senses, and beginning to perceive, firstly, that the only real impossibility was for him to keep away from the Beverleys forever—that is to say, for any longer. Secondly, that if he wanted to recover the old friendly footing, he must let Amy know that she could trust him never to renew the infatuated appeal. And, thirdly, that to meet again for the first time thus, by chance, and in company, was just the opportunity wanted for breaking the ice.

After these horrible three weeks, under a horrible spell from which he had barely emerged, he longed consumedly for the sight of her face, the sound of her voice, the sense of her presence. To meet as perfect strangers even would be like returning to sunlight after weeks of hiding in a catacomb. And the solid blessing of having this girl for his friend, of enjoying the free, open, almost daily companionship

of a mind exquisitely attuned to his, he had possessed and let slip to catch at an unsubstantial dream!

But their estrangement would grieve her; and he said to himself that it rested solely with him and his power of self-conquest to avert the necessity of a change—a breach in their relations. So should she even incline to view what had passed the other night as the mere brief vagary of a boyish imagination, without root in his past or consequence in his future, he, David would not deceive her.

Elliston's party was planned and carried out with characteristic neatness and precision. The guests started in two detachments; the larger, escorted by himself, in the steam-launch *Gossamer*, which would land them under cliffs just practicable for climbing to reach the ferny glen and rendezvous above. The non-sailors, who included David, Lalla, and the elder ladies, went round by road in a brake. These were first on the spot, arriving just as *Gossamer* was running into the gully below.

Among the landed passengers David only saw one: Amy—(Mrs. Beverley, he heard somebody say, had been kept at home by a cold)—as they slowly filed up the toilsome ascent, and joined the group awaiting them.

It was that meeting in a crowd—prosy, unsentimental—that he had desired, yet he felt mortally constrained as he took the hand she held out without conscious embarrassment.

Was it his three weeks' fast from the desire of his eyes, or the glamour enhancing a thing irrevocably lost? Amy, that spiritual little person, seemed endued to-day with a new and more human loveliness, endangering David's sworn stoicism more than he had reckoned on.

"I can't think," said Eveleen, aside to her mother and Barbara, but audibly to David, who stood by, "how she can flaunt about in that outlandish gown and hat; like the girls in *Patience*; enough to frighten the gulls."

"Evey, *do* you think she paints?" asked Barbara, suddenly, in a tone as of dawning respect.

"She does it very badly, then," said Eveleen, with the decision of an expert.

"Hectic, very hectic," averred Mrs. Ferrier, shaking her head. "Consumptive, no doubt, like her mother."

"Stuff!" said Eveleen; "if there's one thing I hate, it's affectation. Did you see her pretend to be frightened at that cow, just to get the men to make a fuss over her?"

"Her demure airs are sickening," said Bar-

bara. "I know I should like to show her up some day—if I get the chance."

David knew that his sisters and Amy never fraternized—(how should they?)—but these venomous thrusts were something quite new, and took him aback. He turned on his heel, muttering to himself that he supposed social critics, like others, must always be killing something.

"No 'Thieves' Roast' to-day," said Elliston aside to him, jokingly. The spread in the glen was quite another affair. The lunch, ready packed on board, was carried up by the yachtsmen, and set up on the mossy ground beside the rill that trickled through the highland ravine. Arrangements, weather, everything was perfect. Elliston, as host, charmed all present by his delightfully fresh and unconventional, yet courteous, ways. They felt a personal interest in exerting themselves to make the picnic a success, in hopes that the giver, flattered by the result of his first social venture, would follow it up by a tennis party or a dance at the Mount. The ladies overflowed with admiration of his activity and resource. He seemed, indeed, to have the eye and ear of an Indian hunter, and the nimble agility of a mountain goat. When he descried some spot-

ted sea bird's eggs, invisible to the others, on a rocky ledge, seemingly inaccessible, Eveleen dared him to get them for her. The old ladies shrieked and hid their eyes. But he performed the feat with such disappointing facility as to cheat her of the gallant effect.

Lunch was well over; the party split up into groups that changed and interchanged. The curate displayed his skill in flirting with three young ladies at once, as a conjuror keeps many balls flying in the air. David's good nature, as usual, saddled him with the thankless tasks others rejected. To-day he did not care. After that first pang of joy, that was mostly pain, he felt dull, as though he had swallowed a narcotic. This festive occasion was ill-adapted for serious talk or private explanations. He might just as well be helping the men to clear away the lunch, or obliging Elliston by escorting Mrs. Rowley and Mrs. Churchstow to the top of Molt Head and along Roden Down, as doing anything else. Those matrons had never got so far in their lives, and wanted him to show them "Ralph's Hole," a curious cavity on the cliffs near the Windstone Pits, the traditional hiding-place of a famous smuggler.

David's late rambles had made him familiar with the ground; but his charges walked so

slowly, and required such careful piloting over rough and insecure places, that the best part of the afternoon was over when at length he got them back to the Glen, red and panting, but happy, since henceforth they could say they had seen Ralph's Hole and the Windstone Pits. Everything that was passing had become for David as hazy and unimportant as a dream, until, by and by, as the sun dropped and the hour fixed for breaking up brought back successive parties of stragglers to the meeting-place in the Glen, whence the wagonette was visible waiting near the road above, and *Gossamer* getting up steam in the cove below, some one asked—

“Where is Miss Beverley?”

“I saw her go gathering honeysuckles by herself on the cliff,” said Barbara, instantly; “I’ll go after her and call her. Come, Mr. Chilley.” She had the curate in tow.

An ominous something in Barbara’s tone prompted David to try and anticipate her in her kindly quest. By striking in a straight line along the face of the cliff, he cut off some of the windings of the coastguard path that the other two were following, rejoining it some hundred yards ahead of them. He could hear their voices in the rear behind a curve. No Amy

was visible. He walked rapidly along the foot-path, here pretty level, lying half way up the face of a steep declivity dappled with golden gorse and purple heather, sun-scorched bracken and tufts of thrift, with the great notched tors above, and sloping down below him to the shoreless sea.

The track plunged presently into a stretch of low scrub wood, known as Dodbrooke Walk : a winding, leafy archway of dwarf oaks and Spanish chestnuts and hazel boughs overhead ; right and left a wilderness of honeysuckles and ferns and briar-rose, where the coo of the nesting wood-pigeons alternated with the cry of the sea-gulls skimming the waters that gleamed in lustrous pools of emerald-green and peacock blue through the masses of foliage on the wooded precipice.

Here David halted. Was it possible Amy could have strayed so far as this —nearly half way back to Orestone? Then the sound of Barbara's voice behind goaded him on, to avoid being overtaken.

Suddenly, as he rounded a bend in the path, two figures were there before him : Amy—the back of her head was towards him as she stood tightly clasping her handful of honeysuckle—Amy, and he, Elliston, the handsome, audacious,

life-enjoying stranger from over seas, was folding her unresistingly in a close embrace and looking down into her sweet eyes, his own aflame with passionate fondness.

David felt exactly as if he had received a bodily wound, piercing and crippling the power of action. Then with electric speed came the sense of Barbara nigh at hand, bold as a jay, malicious and evil-tongued. He snapped his cane in two, flung the pieces into the thicket, and disappeared after them all in a moment.

Amy started at the sound. Elliston had released her waist but taken her hand. The honeysuckles were strewn all over the turf. David, looking back through the leafage, saw the two stand thus, and heard Barbara's loud whisper to her cavalier as she whisked close by where her brother was screened in the bushes :

" Oh, Mr. Chilley, Edwin and Angelina ! Did you ever——" Then aloud, with cheerful innocence : " My dear Amy, so here's where you are ! We thought you were lost. They are sending out search parties in all directions."

" But I started first, Miss Ferrier," interposed Elliston, without changing his attitude, " and so have anticipated you all in finding the truant."

David never knew exactly how he got back

to the Glen. He drove home, as he had come, in the brake, reaching Lannacombe before the arrivals from the launch. He was waiting gloomily in the drawing-room for the mixed meal that was to supersede dinner to-night, when half-an-hour later Eveleen and Barbara rushed in, beside themselves with the news, and cried aloud to Lalla and David:

“Mr. Elliston is engaged—to Amy. To AMY!”

It was a thunderbolt for Lalla, who was unprepared. Barbara struck in: “Conny Rowley says she expected it. They met there at a dinner-party the night before last, and after dinner Mr. Elliston took them all out in *Gossamer* by moonlight. She thought then he seemed desperately smitten, and she saw him go in to call at Sunnyside yesterday afternoon; it seemed as if he couldn’t keep away.”

Lalla was recovering from the first shock. Feeling cross, and wanting to vex somebody, she said:

“Well, there’s no accounting for any man’s tastes. But I did think better of Mr. Elliston . . .”

This was a fling at David; but looking round she saw he was gone. No matter, there would be future opportunities in plenty to

descant in his presence on her sly, underhand, flirting propensities; to discover, in one and the same breath, that only a foolish and fantastic schoolgirl would swallow the ancestral blacksmith, and that it was exceedingly generous of Mr. Elliston to propose, considering how she had flung herself at his feet; in short, to vent freely the stream of jealousy that springs eternal in the average woman's breast.

David was pacing his studio in the bleary moonlight, looking and feeling like a caged lunatic. The skeleton grinned at him out of the corner, the lay figure made mocking gestures, his own paintings of familiar scenes struck his sight like ugly parodies. His young head was in an uproar. The thing was too strange, too unreal. It affected him like a piece of diabolical jugglery.

The felicity which he hardly dared conceive to himself—it was too sacred—had fallen at the feet of this stranger, after a three weeks' acquaintance and some half-a-dozen occasions of meeting. No need for a Jacob's service here. Elliston, who, moreover, could have nothing in common with her—neither tastes, nor education, nor habits, nor class ideas.

David had come to a standstill in front of a looking-glass, his glance and his phillipic

arrested by something queer he saw there. He burst into a half laugh. Why, it was his own face. And there was written the answer to his protest.

Was not *his* love absolute; stronger than reason, education, character, custom, and self-interest; a potter with power over the clay, to fashion it over again, according to its strange and whimsical device?

CHAPTER VII.

HAND IN HAND.

CERTAIN experiences—painful experiences—condense the training of long periods of time into a small compass. David arose on the morrow feeling several years older and wiser than yesterday.

He had buried his dead. Passions, like other forces, are convertible. Of the grave of his great longing he proposed to make the foundation-stone of a greater fortitude, which he was forthwith invited by Mrs. Beverley to put to the proof.

“If you will come this afternoon,” she wrote, “I shall be glad, . . . And Amy, too, would like to see you.”

David went, feeling fore-armed from top to toe, and equal to congratulating Elliston with a good grace, or executing any other conventional antic that might be required of him.

Mrs. Beverley, whom he found alone in the drawing-room, with scarcely the force to rise from her chair to greet him, looked like a

patient imperfectly recovered from the nervous shock of a railway collision. David's old familiar face and voice had the effect of upsetting her anew. She pretended to laugh, to save herself from crying.

"It has come on me like a thunderbolt," she began, agitatedly. "Amy cannot understand why I am not delighted. Perhaps I should be, for I like Mr. Elliston, and she is so happy. She thinks me positively unkind, that I can look coldly or disapprovingly on a thing she has thus at heart. But oh, David, it is all so sudden! It has made her a different being. I cannot get over it—I cannot."

Here Amy's figure came gliding round the verandah, and paused in front of the bow-windows. Mrs. Beverley, signing to David to open them and admit her, left the room hastily, not wishing to treat him to a fit of hysterics.

Alone with Amy—perhaps for the last time—David regarded her bashfully, attracted, yet staggered, by the metamorphosis in her countenance. "Different," Mrs. Beverley had said complainingly. Aye, but beautified by some divine afflatus, some mystic beatitude, ideally human, that irradiated her features, harmonizing what was imperfect; never so much life, such eloquent expression there till

now! It wrung him inwardly, as he stayed mute, and as unmoved on the face of him as the chair on which he sat. Amy, in desperation, broke the long silence at last, appealingly:

"David! David! *Can* you not wish me joy?"

"You know I do, Amy," he answered, spontaneously. "You know I could rejoice with all my heart at anything that I knew was for your happiness."

She laughed with ineffable gaiety.

"Happiness! It is you and I who have gone hand-in-hand trying to cheat ourselves about that—and its meaning, David. Falling in love with shadows in the water, art-reflections in our own and people's minds, pursuing and ardently worshipping their shadowy worth, till life tears the bandage from our eyes, and we wake and see how empty our dream was."

The long habit of frankly speaking out her thoughts to him she could not check all at once, now that frankness was cruel. Nor would he have had it otherwise. Her confidence was all of her that was left him, and his neutral, imperturbable attitude and manner led her on.

"What do you mean, Amy?" he asked.

"I mean," she said impulsively, "that you

and I—that all art-votaries who choose an ideal pursuit and its satisfactions for the staff of their life—have one day to find out that what they took for bread is only—a precious stone.”

Words that, seeming to brush away like cobwebs all the old zeal they had shared together, hurt him to the quick. But they drew nothing from him but a halting, dry epitaph on slaughtered sympathies. She could not guess how hard they died.

“Yet it was a kind of happiness, Amy, in the old Bexeter days, at the Art School. . . .”

The daily walk back together, the ideas and aspirations exchanged, or shared, the excitement of the prize competition when Amy carried off all three medals; another day when they two secretly pledged their watches to be able to buy Vasari!

“It contented us then,” said Amy; “but what we were striving after was at the best only a glorious counterfeit and a makeshift. Do you remember that poor woman we used to pity as we sketched her at her cottage door, nursing her idiot boy? She was richer than we, as those who have taken part in life are worth more than those who have merely looked on.”

David, who had always properly scouted the assertion that no woman can be a true artist, was asking himself with a burning heart, whether perhaps the blasphemers might be right.

"I shall keep up my painting if I can," resumed Amy presently; "but I don't think he—Mr. Elliston—will care for me to give up too much time to it."

So she could "give it up" cheerfully, as you might croquet or waltzing! Had it really never been more to her than that? Or was her love for Elliston more transforming, more soul-absorbing than David's for her, which, martyr, slave—criminal, possibly though it might have made of him, could not make his offered apostasy to the vocation to which he was pledged, less of a self-mutilation than before.

"You care for him as much as that, Amy?" The lightly-spoken words came from a heart growing heavier every time she opened her lips.

Her eyes were full of light, her cheeks suddenly pale, as her answer flashed out.

"You will not find the measure."

"Grant he may deserve it," muttered David inaudibly, adding, as in apology: "Recollect, Amy, to me he is still almost a stranger."

"To all of you," said Amy, smiling "except me. He has told me all about himself, and his hard and adventurous career. And I feel certain one of my ancestors must have been a master mariner, or pioneer on trackless seas and undiscovered coral islands. I love to hear of them! It is no wonder if he feels our life here stagnant and mean, and our dull and negative virtues do not strike him with very warm admiration."

"And perhaps the first thing he will want to do will be to carry you off to show you the South Seas," said David, jestingly.

"There is nothing I should like better," replied Amy, seriously. "But we shall live at the Mount, and only make little yachting cruises now and then. He will do anything I ask; and I ask it because of my mother."

There was a pause; and then came the inevitable *coup de grace* for the vanquished:

"He likes you so much, David; and now that mother is beginning to come round, I have only one wish left, to see you good friends with the man whose wife I very soon shall be."

"Is it to be soon, Amy?" he inquired quickly. She blushed.

"Yes, if I can persuade my mother. It will

make very little difference to her after all; for when I am married I can still see her every day."

"Then she is reconciled to the engagement?"

"Well, you see," said Amy, smiling, "there can be no reasonable objection, as she will admit when she has had time to get over her first surprise."

Elliston was announced as she spoke, and both felt, if only from his way of entering a room, that he was one to tread down greater difficulties than had beset his soldier-like courtship.

He came to her and their hands met, and in David's heart there was a last kick and cry, as of some young, unwanted, obstreperous thing put out of its misery.

No reasonable objection. David thought of the blacksmith. But besides that he was safe in his grave, David knew with what scorn Amy would regard him if he regarded this homely fact as a serious impediment, which, to do him justice, he did not. He was thinking of Mrs. Beverley.

Fervently opposed though on principle she was to "caste prejudice," the crude practical application to her own household stuck in her

throat; and Amy's joyous confession, poured out on her return from the picnic yesterday, had been received by her mother with a shock of repulsion and dismay. Never yet had there been the faintest misunderstanding between them. All at once the momentous, irreconcilable difference was there, and the fondest of mothers found herself in direct opposition to the strongest sentiment her daughter had ever experienced, an incredible evening, when their words, their looks, their mere presence seemed to jar on each other.

A night's reflection warned the mother that, whatever her reluctance to the idea of the match, she would have to get over it, or suffer estrangement from her daughter—a more terrible bugbear to her than death in its worst form. Sooner than imperil her hold on Amy's affections she would have ended by consenting to a far less eligible party than George Elliston with his handsome person, magnetically attractive manners, and fairly competent means. To refuse him Amy's hand for a disadvantage of birth for which nature had so amply compensated him, would be to stamp herself in her daughter's eyes as worldly or selfish, which she was not, and jealous, which, of course, she was, and break their close union. The poor

woman could still delude herself into thinking she could win gratitude by according an affectionate provisional sanction, as she did in a very few days. She had Amy's radiant countenance for her reward.

And a few days later she withdrew all objection to their fixing the earliest possible day for the wedding. At present her daughter was as lost to her as though neither could speak the other's language. Elliston came constantly; Mrs. Beverley wanted to become better acquainted with her future son-in-law, but he and Amy had literally neither eyes, nor ears, nor understanding but for each other—their attention to any one else was an almost laughable pretence. Mutually engrossed, the lovers were sorry company for their fellow-creatures.

Mrs. Beverley smiled and submitted, but saw no object in prolonging this stage. She knew that when her daughter was married she would regain her in a fashion; their relations would begin again on a new footing. Elliston was ready to agree to whatever conditions in the way of pecuniary and domestic arrangements she might impose.

"Let it be, then," she said, "as soon as you please."

"But it is clear to me," she let fall once to

David, sadly, "that if from jealousy, of love of authority, or worldly prudence, or personal disapproval of her choice, whether with reason or without, I had forbidden the banns, it would not have retarded the ceremony by a single day. Looking back, it seems to me as if it was settled between them, unconsciously, the first time they met."

Since she had consented, why and for what need they wait? The sooner the better for all concerned, a date was fixed three weeks ahead; the pair were to spend a brief honeymoon yachting in Scotland in the *Watersprite*, purchased from Lord Otho by Elliston, at a high figure.

David's self-conquest appeared to Mrs. Beverley, who alone gave it a thought, almost heroic. Whatever he had done with his foolish dream, his chimera, he meant it to give trouble to none but himself in future. Nor did he stamp upon and vilify his idol because it could not answer his prayers. Elliston he honestly liked, notwithstanding his better fortune, and, lest they should think he was sulking—anxious, too, to establish a tranquil, friendly footing in the changed circle, he came whenever invited, to make a fourth at Sunnyside, greatly to Mrs. Beverley's comfort. For the hero and heroine,

mutually enchanted, the pale mother and the discarded boy-suitor were just then mere conventional shapes of whose presence they were but theoretically aware. Amy seemed to tread the clouds, buoyant, like some saint in glory, rapt in delicious far-off contemplations. The fascination of her person, vivid with feminine animation and heightened loveliness, bound Elliston with a spell that made of his uncommon strength, weakness, of his utmost shrewdness, folly. His ardor was of no paltering, reason-ridden sort. Leave to the Miss Ferriers to prate publicly of Amy's superior social position and two thousand pounds as factors in the situation. To David, who saw Elliston in company of his future bride, such illusions were forbidden. No stake was too high to his dashing audacity, no peril daunting—the world well lost, in his estimate, with her kiss for the promised prize. Had he lived till the present hour? You would have said, No.

Ardent, yet subjected. What elf of mischief had taught Amy, artless and tender, to hold him in a wanton's abject thrall, with neither power nor will to free himself, in his growing eagerness for the right to enfold her in his arms, her beauty, his beauty; the eyes, the lips, the form, his to cherish and caress?

So David mused once or twice, as he walked home with the wild man Elliston—Elliston enamoured, changed, tamed, magically fettered—his passion fed by kindling hope, as poor David's was deadened by the certainty of its eternal futility. Angel nor devil could have stayed the favored lover's course ; the past was of no account, there was no future but his coming joy.

CHAPTER VIII.

FELLOW-ROVERS.

EVERYBODY concerned wished the wedding to be a quiet one ; the bride's relations and friends at a distance were glad to shirk the tedious journey to a world's end place like Orestone. The weather was settled fine ; the dresses fitted without alteration ; all, in short, had gone so smoothly that it sounded like a serious hitch when, as David and Elliston entered the drawing-room at Sunnyside together at dinner-time on the eve of the wedding-day, Mrs. Beverley announced to them :—

“Poor Mr. Churchstow has such a dreadful attack of lumbago that he won't be able to officiate to-morrow!”

Elliston laughed. “Well, I suppose for that purpose the mate will do as well as the skipper,” he said, in his downright, sailor-like way.

“Indeed, no,” said Amy. “I said I really couldn't and wouldn't be married by Mr. Chilley.

It seems only the other day that he was coming home from school with his satchel. It would be like when we were children and married our dolls. Besides, he has such a very bad cold in his head that he would set us both sneezing, for sympathy. Fortunately, the vicar has a college friend staying with him, who is a much more dignified person, and will take his place. He is coming to-night with Mrs. Churchstow, and you will see for yourselves. He has only just returned from New Guinea, where he has been stationed for ever so many years."

"*A missionary?*" exclaimed Elliston, with such spontaneous disgust and dismay that there was a general laugh.

"Well, I hope I shan't shock you, Mrs. Beverley," he said, "but I will confess that I have no great reverence for parsons who have slipped the halter here to go hectoring, and land-grabbing, and making mischief under cover of their cloth out there, where there is no check on them. In my opinion, they had far better stay at home and mind their own business."

"Oh," said Amy, "I am sure there are dreadful people among them, and a great many, I daresay, who do more harm than good. But this is a very nice missionary, and he will save

us all the trouble of talking; he has so much to say."

Mrs. Churchstow and Mr. Masters the gentleman under discussion, were announced as she spoke. The clerical adventurer certainly in bearing and in manner, as in stature, towered, so to speak, a head and shoulders above the despised curate, as one long accustomed and well fitted to lead. But that a dash of Elliston's modest reticence with regard to his feats of travel would have been an improvement was what every one was thinking. As Amy had foretold, he monopolized the conversation. It was all of himself, his discoveries and perilous exploits, and aimed, seemingly, at astonishing the rival explorer, and letting him know that the speaker, though a man of peace in every way, was no laggard in daring action and adventure either. It was his enterprising temperament which, when he found to his dismay that it had been in no wise sensibly moderated by his ordination, had driven him into the hazardous vocation he had followed for twenty years. Taking the silence around him for breathless interest, he plunged into a sea of marvellous anecdotes and descriptions, drawing the long bow, decided David, derisively, when it came to tiger mosquitoes as big as birds, and trees

that grew boards ready made, or ate bones, and temples to sharks, and monster pythons. You would have thought, as Amy said, he must bear a charmed life to have come through it all unhurt, and be sitting there eating grouse and sipping sherry.

Then from the brute creation he passed to their near relations, in human shape, remarking on their narrow line of demarcation out there: kings with barbaric names, and man-eating and head-hunting tribes, and legends of half-caste beach-combers, and slavers, black and white. Addressing himself familiarly to Elliston, he asked—

“Did you ever meet ‘Great Sandy,’ as they called him?”

“Never,” replied the addressed. “Did you?”

“Aye.” The parson openly revelled in this fresh and unlooked-for advantage, inviting to a new and startling yarn. “That is, I saw his dead body. I happened to be in Russell Island when it was washed ashore, after the hurricane that put an end to that hero’s calculations, and cheated the gallows of its legitimate prey. That man’s name,” he announced impressively, “is held in such awe in certain districts of the Pacific, that it has passed into a

common nautical oath, and you hear excited sailors sing out 'Great Sandy!' as a change from 'Devil take me!' or 'Eternal Thunder!'"

"Now, you are going to tell us something dreadful," interposed Amy. "I see mother turning pale already, and laying down her knife and fork. Don't, Mr. Masters, please."

"Oh, I can skip the horrors," said the parson, cheerfully. "I don't deny that Great Sandy's history, like that of most popular heroes, needs pruning down to fit it for ears polite;" and he and Mr. Elliston exchanged a glance of masculine superiority and understanding.

"The first I heard of him," pursued the narrator, "was as the successful beach-comber of a certain island in the North-West Pacific, lying out of the track of ships, and at that time not down in the charts, but known and worked as a secret store of wealth by a trader at Hong Kong. He placed our Sandy—his real name was Alexander—as his agent, to collect the island produce—pearl shells, cocoa-nuts, beche-de-mer, sandal-wood—from the natives, by means of barter or otherwise; sending a ship to call for it from time to time. Alexander was planted for long quite alone among wild and often hostile aborigines, defending himself

chiefly by the awe he inspired. His uncommon hardihood, and the ascendancy he obtained over those credulous and ignorant men, for whom he was a kind supreme being, made his services very valuable in his business. But he grew discontented with it, or the share of profit allotted him, and came off on the ship when next it called, suborned or hoodwinked the crew, sold vessel and cargo on his own account at an intermediate port they touched at and the owner heard no more of him.

“He was ‘wanted’ for some time after that; but the thing cooled down (I think the trader died), and bygones were let be. Alexander used to say he only paid himself the arrears due to him; that the contract was unfair; that he, who had risked his life, and had all the pains, had been swindled out of his just profits. He turned up again as a labor-agent in Queensland—master of a ship occupied in making trips to New Guinea and other island groups to procure natives as hired laborers for our colonial plantations. It was in this lucrative but iniquitous trade that he earned his nickname. He was extraordinarily successful in a vocation tempting to unscrupulous men, and likely to create them if they were wanting. Mr. Elliston, you know the ground—you will contradict me

if I am wrong," he said politely, pulling himself up, as if suddenly reminded that there was a planter in the present company.

Elliston said he wished he could; confessing that he himself, as a colonist, had some experience of the difficulty of trusting to such agencies for obtaining labor recruits without trespassing on the rights and customs of the natives. Emboldened by his plain sympathy, the first speaker resumed:

"And when the recruiting sergeant is paid a high premium per head, villainous men will stop short of nothing to effect their purpose of bringing back a ship-load, whilst the planters—excuse me, sir; the more honor to the exceptions—shut their eyes to the fraud and outrage constantly involved. I won't shock the ladies here by dwelling on the now notorious facts; blacks enticed on board on some pretence, then bound and carried off into virtual slavery; or run down in their canoes while fishing, and shot if they try to escape swimming; their skulls bartered for slaves or sandal-wood with savage chiefs who collect such trophies."

"Come, Mr. Masters," expostulated Mrs Beverley, warmly, "you don't expect us to believe that such monstrous proceedings on the

part of whites and Englishmen go on in the last quarter of the nineteenth century?"

Mr. Masters smiled. "Till the other day they did so unchecked—nay, tacitly sanctioned. That cannot to-day be said, where English law holds good; but things of the kind will go on in the twentieth century, if a spot on the globe remains where the law is difficult to enforce, which means that might is right; and the stronger party are interested in the hushing-up tyrannous misdeeds. I appeal to Mr. Elliston to say if I am right or wrong."

Elliston declared he could emphatically corroborate every word from his personal knowledge.

"Besides," pursued his fluent fellow-rover, "'blackbirding,' as they call it—like war, and the Roman games, bull-fights, and other inhuman practices—had the excitement of constant danger to give it a fascination to natures not without fine qualities, and blinded or hardened them to its atrocious features.

"Sandy, for instance, though much too quick with his revolver, could generally get what he wanted without resorting to actual violence; which, besides, would spoil the market for future operations on the same field. He was not brutal unless when enraged; and could be

generous. His cleverness and daring found attraction, no doubt, in the constant peril: he has been known to face a whole hostile tribe unarmed, and put them to flight by his seemingly supernatural courage. Many of these agents have paid with their lives the penalty of their own or previous outrages."

Mrs. Beverley sighed. "Of course," she said, "wherever there is a lawless district it will always attract the lawless characters from all parts of the earth."

"More than that," said Mr. Masters, "you find that men removed from the restraints of civilization will revert to man's aboriginal ways; as in a garden left to itself, flowers and herbs to their wild forms. I have known many who would probably observe the ten commandments at home, violate quite coolly the first principles of fairness and humanity when dealing with inferior races: make or wink at false contracts, false promises; shoot a native for stealing a gimlet, or even for sport, and boast of the fact. And if to-day we don't get the blacks to part any more with solid wealth in exchange for buttons or pins or bits of paper, it is solely because our dupes have grown wiser. But I'm forgetting about Great Sandy. When two years ago the facts about the labor trade were ex-

posed, and there was a burst of popular indignation and something had to be done, he was among those charged before the Commissioners with high-handed proceedings—that is provoked or unprovoked murder.

“ He was acquitted, as having acted in self-defence, and to shield a well-known and respectable individual implicated with him. One of his next feats was in connection with the escape of two notorious French convicts from New Caledonia. He contrived to communicate with them through a warder, or some of the prisoners at large on parole, and one stormy night, when no very sharp look-out was kept, they and some others got off, presumably in Sandy’s boat, and thence to his ship. He reappeared with a solid sum of money, a bribe paid—so the story went—by a female friend of one of the condemned men, and without his fugitives, whom he had transferred to an American vessel as castaways picked up at sea. Not long after this, whilst cruising on a small vessel with only a couple of other hands, he came on a party who had been wrecked on a small and barren island on their way to Australia. Their ship had been partly laden with specie, a portion of which had been saved, and the crew, when Sandy found them, were literally starving

in the midst of wealth. He agreed to take them to Sydney, at a high capitation fee and the price besides of the whole of the salvage, which, of course, was not theirs to bestow. But he stuck to his bargain, and it was agreed that he should dispose as he would of the freight, which would be supposed to have gone to the bottom. But they no sooner got to Sydney than the story came out, and Sandy had to make himself scarce. Three weeks later, his boat was lost in a storm off Russell Island, where, several days after, his body was washed ashore and identified by a native sailor, the only survivor of the wreck."

Mrs. Beverley drew a long breath, as of relief.

"So ill-gotten gains never prosper," said Elliston, good-humoredly, "there is that comfort, Mrs. Beverley, at least."

"Certainly," she said, "civilization can hardly have a moralizing effect on these savages, as we call them, if introduced in such ways as you describe. Men of honor like yourself and Mr. Masters must have more than enough to do to counteract them."

"Aye, and in time we shall succeed," said Mr. Masters, hopefully. "I have got a very fair specimen of the material we have to work on—not one of my own flock though—here

with me now. A Samoan sailor, who got into jail for a petty theft committed under the influence of drink. He was discharged yesterday, and the chaplain asked me to take him in hand. He seems amiable and intelligent, and I mean to place him in an institution to be trained for a native teacher."

And the conversation turned on his present mission station and head converts. Here he appeared at his best, answering Elliston's numerous questions, put with courteous interest, in a subject in which he too showed himself an intelligent observer, with much curious and interesting information.

Elliston left early with David. At parting, Amy with a glance thanked her betrothed for the goodwill he had shown in not quarrelling with Mr. Masters; who, when he was gone, could not praise him enough. He congratulated Amy, adding that if all colonists were like Mr. Elliston, his own work among the uncivilized races would go on at a very different rate of speed.

But David and Elliston, once outside, united in abusing the intrusive, irrepressible missionary.

"Now you know what they mean by the colonial bore," said Elliston; "that sort of thing grows on a man like a liking for whisky.

There's nothing for it but the pledge. That's why I'll never be drawn into yarning."

"Did he expect you to believe all his queer traveller's tales?"

Elliston shrugged his shoulders. "But what he told you about 'Great Sandy' was no queerer than the truth. I've heard stories on that subject that would have capped his; but I didn't tell them, lest you should class them with the men with tails and the python."

David lingered on his way from the Mount up the Lannacombe valley, a lonely lane following the watercourse, traceable from afar by the thick tree-growth among uplands otherwise bare and bleak; and with thatched farms smuggled like birds' nests into sheltered corners against the hills, asleep or dead in the starlight. He was reluctant to hurry on, as it were to meet the dawn, the dawn of her wedding-day. The *Watersprite* was at anchor in the harbor, her white wings folded that were to carry off Amy and her chosen lord to-morrow. For the last time David had sat with Amy Beverley under her old roof. With Mrs. Elliston, wrapped up in her husband—a man who lived in external things—and her household concerns, his acquaintance would dwindle to insignificance.

Perhaps she was right, and he had been trying to nourish himself on air, and the links and sympathies between them that he prized were unsubstantial and worthless. Perhaps in offering himself up on the altar of dreams—dreams of a better world than the real one—he was sacrificing to a false god.

His gaze searched the spangled vault above him, as though some answer might flash from those golden eyes that look down on the good and evil of the earth. They shone on nothing in it at once so passionate and so pure, so steadfast and light-giving, as his heart's devotion to his lost, dear little comrade.

CHAPTER IX.

BRIDAL INCIDENTS.

THE Miss Ferriers' tone towards Amy had undergone a summary transformation. Far too sensible girls they to nurse a grudge for its own empty sake, once the grievous fact irrevocable.

The fantastic little artist maiden, with the high-flown ideas and æsthetic frocks, fit chum for their poor fool of a brother, was one person; a laughing-stock and a social failure. The future Mrs. Elliston, the mistress of the Mount, a new centre (sorely needed) for local society, was another, and full of promise to those whom it might concern. Simple Amy accepted wonderingly the novel affectionate attentions lavished upon her from this quarter, scarcely catching the clue in Eveleen's plain-spoken entreaty that last afternoon, when she came to view the presents:

"And you *will* give a dance at the Mount, Amy darling, soon, very soon after you come back, before the yachting season is over?"

Amy darling said nothing, but Elliston struck in for her: "Miss Ferrier, I give you my word that she shall, and you shall be the first person we invite to our *corroborie*," and off went clever Eveleen, persuaded that heaven had made this match expressly for the benefit of herself and sisters, to afford them a fresh hunting-ground for flirtations. If Mr. Elliston had not fallen in love, he might have tired of this dull place, and thrown up the Mount in six months. Now they had him housed, wived, a social fixture; and for this they were beholden to Amy. Their new-born cordiality was as sincere as their former indifference. At every meal David heard nothing talked of but Amy's new boots, the pattern of the chairs on the *Watersprite*; the expensive wall-papers and carpets at the Mount. The bridal ceremony had no more attentive and delighted spectators than David's sisters three.

It was that rare thing, a perfectly cheerful wedding. Mrs. Beverley had preached herself out of crying. It must needs be that such changes come. Why, she should bless the chance which, in depriving her of her daughter, established her as her near neighbor. Although Miss Beverley had often looked prettier, she had never been so much admired, Orestone never having paid her much attention before. Elliston

emerging from the obscurity into which on such occasions the hero is apt to sink, won all hearts; hearts feminine by his manly good looks, hearts masculine by his open, pleasant address and good-fellowship. Masters, the missionary, justified Amy's insistence on his tying the knot. His tall person, flowing gray beard, commanding eye, and authoritative voice made of him an impressive figure—"Like Moses in his prime," as old Mr. Ferrier happily expressed it. The curate, whose cold was worse than ever, put in a stentorian sneeze at the most solemn moments of the service, "on purpose," thought David, who suspected that weakling would gladly have stood in the bridegroom's shoes.

"How will David take it?" his sisters had asked themselves; their besetting curiosity and appetite for amusement eager to pounce, shark-like, on such a rare morsel as the contortions of a discarded suitor. Their eyes seemed never to have left him these three weeks. But this brother was born to disappoint them. He neither made the discovery that he had never really cared about Amy, nor that she was not worth having, nor pretended he had jilted her, nor flirted conspicuously with somebody else, nor ran down Elliston. David always was a puling, poor-spirited thing, not worth his salt.

It was not his part to take her hand, to kiss her cheek—not even to aspire to that; the nuptial rite that bound Amy to another for their joint lives could not put her more wholly out of his reach than she already was; the only difference was to his imagination.

So he said to himself as he stood by and watched the ceremony. It was out of all reason that it should work this change in him, he felt, when it was over, and coming out he seemed to look upon a different and a mis-created earth. Like the death event, which though the life taken may be long doomed and as good as extinct, may yet make the whole world different to the survivor.

The wedding-feast at Sunnyside was over, the *Watersprite* lying close at hand in the harbor to carry off the bridal passengers, and the wedding-guests mustering in the hall in a body to marshal them on board. David, who shrank from an obtrusive farewell, had slipped away in advance. He would not be a man in a crowd of inquisitive onlookers. Grimly he said to himself he would never be missed. He had done his duty as a member of society, and should now take his pleasure in the cheap and sober form of a solitary walk.

He hastened down to the ferry, and in five

minutes was landed across the harbor, whence a meandering footpath skirts the shore-lines for miles, under furze downs. He followed it for half-an-hour to Malcombe Point, a post of vantage, where he meant to wait and watch the *Watersprite* pass presently, as pass she must. Thus he would be the last Orestonian to see Amy on her way.

The coast line, though less wild and striking here than west of the harbor, towards the Glen and Roden Down, was scarcely less lonely. In parts the stubborn rock had been brought under cultivation, and green and flowery patches stretched down to the margin of the beach, where clover and vetch crops intermixed with sea-weed and crab-baskets. But round Malcombe Point, far and near, the soil was not worth reclaiming. Heath and furze, twined over with the red filaments and wan flowerets of the dodder parasite, had it all their own way between the sharp tors, and the dark shadow gliding over his path of some sea-bird on the wing overhead was the only visible sign of animal life.

David sought solitude as a kind of moral undress—sun and air bath for a mind too sick and sore to endure the constraint, disguise, and friction that the society of any human creature

imposes. But to find in such isolation a remedy, or even a solace, requires a mental solidity more commonly absent than present, whence the common necessity and invention of society.

Lying there flat on his back on the wild thyme and heather, with the continuous whirr of the crickets and the splash of the waves on the jut of rocks in his ears, staring vacantly up into the sky, David saw the book of his life lie open for him to read; and Amy's name was over it all, like the invisible inscription that covers and colors the paper of your check. She had entered into the texture of his daily existence; coloring his every thought and resolution and action; something of her was in whatever he painted; the trees, the waters, the landscape; a sentiment of barren growth, since it awoke no response of the same kind in its object, but which had struck so deep, and spread its roots so widely in his being, that to tear it out of a sudden was not in his power, and bade fair, could it be done, to make a havoc of the ground.

So forgive him if, instead of banishing her from his thoughts now she was another man's bride, he deliberately and lingeringly went over in his memory all their precious hours together

(a certain evening six weeks ago excepted which he never trusted himself to recall) like a miser, marooned, counting the sovereigns he cannot add to nor spend.

Time is an omnipotent devil, and dead certain to rid him of his exclusive passion in the future. But to-day David is what he was yesterday, and the weeks before, and cannot as yet conceive of a to-morrow for himself from which Amy, with her delicate beauty, her kindred spirit, her indefinably soothing yet exhilarating ways—in short the inspiring influence exercised over him by her poetic individuality shall be excluded. Call it as fallacious in the past as it is forbidden in the future, it had become one with all his golden, his ideal aspirations. The rest was miry clay.

For nature, who denied David particularly keen relish for mere animal enjoyment, who made of him a laggard in field sports, a sorry boon-companion, had given him possibilities of compensation in a thoughtful and sensitive mind, with sharp appetites whose gratification could afford him an ecstasy as mysterious to the rest of his family as, to David, the sweets of finery, of sumptuous fare, and riotous living.

Devonshire, however agreeably lonely, is no desert island; and David was shortly brought

down from the clouds by the sound of a hasty tread approaching along the path he had followed to get here. He was half-hidden by the furze where he lay, and only when the step was close upon him did he raise his head. He saw a brown-complexioned, seafaring-looking vagabond shuffling by, who started back in great alarm at the spectacle of David's recumbent and at no time formidable person. Gentlemen of every shade of color are to be seen occasionally about Orestone, birds of passage from the neighboring ports, and the present specimen David judged to be a Malay, from his comparatively light color, and features almost as far removed as his own from the negro type. His only surprise was to come across him so far from the harbor and the attendant liquor shops. Then suddenly recalling Mr. Masters and his reclaimed Samoan, he felt sure this was the man, and gathered himself together for a look at him.

The vagrant, ashamed of his scare, touched his cap, and inquired if this was the right way to East Malcombe. David directed him, his naturally good-natured manner eliciting, as usual in such circumstances, a glib demand for alms, and a pathetic fable, not quite new, of one poor black sailor whose ship left Plymouth without

him ; if he don't get to Dartmouth to-night he lose it certain quite.

"That's gammon," said David, plainly. "I know who you are, my man, and where Mr. Masters picked you up. I see you've cut and run from him already. But don't look so skeered—all that's no business of mine—you're in a free country. Only why on earth, if you want Dartmouth, do you take this wriggling coastguard path, to make the ten miles twenty?"

"If I take turnpike road straight, I meet many people ; some one run—tell Mr. Masters which way find me—he send fetch me back—take me school. I not want go school—I want ship—take me home."

David tossed him half-a-crown to get rid of him. This intrusive, importunate bit of earthy humanity had demolished his poetic reverie, as music slain by a brutal hand cutting the lyre-strings, and he kicked him mentally for his inopportune espionage. For at that very instant the *Watersprite* hove into view round the point, speeding onwards, near to shore, her white sails spread. David, gazing through his field glass, saw Amy standing on deck, Elliston beside her. She recognized the sentinel, or guessed who it must be ; said something to her husband, and waved her handkerchief.

The yacht skimmed the dimpling waters like a swan. You would have sworn it was a conscious thing, proud of its grace and beauty.

It struck the swarthy mariner with admiration. David saw him displaying his white teeth in an approving grin.

"Mighty fine boat that," he said, knowingly. "Let this nigger see."

David lent him the glass. Without its aid he could distinguish the two happy figures on deck—on their winged bridal voyage. Wind and tide were in their favor, and would bring them this evening to Torreville, to sail thence tomorrow to the north, "for a month," said Amy, but David saw her sailing out of his sphere for evermore.

In his absorption he had forgotten he was not alone, and started at an ejaculation from close beside him.

"Great Sandy!" uttered the Samoan sailor, just aloud (making David smile at the unexpected confirmation of Mr. Masters's story of the deceased hero's memory enshrined in an oath), and dropping the hand that held the glass, he regarded the swift smooth progress of the smart little vessel—the perfection of a happy idler's toy—with keen professional interest.

"Yes, she's a good little craft," said David,

taking the glass from him for another look.

But the *Watersprite* had slightly shifted her course, the figures on board were hidden from his view, and the yacht itself now began to disappear behind Malcombe Point.

He was interrupted in his scrutiny by the sailor, who was pulling gently at his coat sleeve to attract his attention to his inquisitive question.

"Master—he on board there—who he skipper? Where he come from?"

David, generally not disinclined to drift into conversation with tramps, was wishing this fellow at Jericho, and that he had not been so weak as to encourage his familiarity.

"Mr. Elliston, of the Mount, at Orestone," he answered. "He's come there quite lately from—well, I should say from much the same part of the world as yourself," he said, but declining to lend the glass again which the other's eyes evidently coveted, with a longing David thought decidedly thievish.

"Elliston—the Mount—Orestone," the man repeated, like a child who wants to fix certain words in its memory. The yacht vanished behind the jutting tongue of rock as he spoke, leaving only a trail on the waters.

David, regarding his dubious companion

retracted his suspicions, struck now by the simple candor of his expression, as it were of childish elation checked by childish disappointment. "Well?" said he, interrogatively.

"He there—he—how you say? Mr. Elliston—he been my skipper once—year—two year ago—he—very man I look for,—and he for me, his old mate . . ."

"Indeed?" said David, adding mentally that Elliston was about as likely to institute a search for a bad shilling. But the speaker ran on, "He help if he hear this nigger want him, but he not know this long while where find Monkey Ned; and now, he sail away," and he threw up his hands helplessly, as though his might-be benefactor were setting sail for the next world.

"Oh, well, he'll be back at the Mount in a month," said David, whose patience was at an end. "If you don't find a ship first you can apply to him then. And unless you want to be benighted and locked up for sleeping under a hedge, you'd better cut along to join the Dartmouth Road at East Malcombe."

And, turning on his heel, he left him. The exaltation of his very melancholy, which had sustained him through the day, was gone. He was no longer the fervent votary at a sacred

spiritual shrine; but Eveleen's tired, irritable, limp, and dejected brother, with muddy boots, trudging back along the over-familiar road, to sit down to the dinner he did not want, and the inevitable profane bridal tittle-tattle that would accompany it to-night.

CHAPTER X.

THE HOUSE-WARMING.

THERE was joy in the house of Ferrier.

The bridal pair had returned more punctually than Eveleen in her most sanguine moments had dared to anticipate. No sooner were they established at the Mount than they showed their proper sense of their new responsibilities by issuing invitations for a dance.

To crown all, it was to meet Lord and Lady Otho Dodbrooke, whose yacht was in the harbor, and whose acquaintance the Ellistons had recently improved in Scotland. Names that wafted with them a spice of fashion, of excitement, if not of faint impropriety, phenomenally rare at Orestone. Morning, noon, and night David's ears rang with "beaded tulle," "*crepe de Chine*," "*passementerie*," and other toilette technicalities in a solemn debate at home.

His new calendar counted two red-letter

days. Last Sunday, when he had, seen Amy at church, and the one before, when meeting Mrs. Beverley, who had been away since the marriage, he had first heard tidings of the absentees.

Amy was very—oh, very—happy. Her first letters seemed written in a paradise of content. Then for awhile the yacht was out of posts' way, amid Scotch isles; then a long silence was made up for by a longer, more detailed, epistle. They were coming back. The Isles of Arran were glorious, and the yacht a beauty. On the other hand, there had been incidental drawbacks—one of the yachtsmen insubordinate—causing a good deal of trouble; and the weather had broken up, deciding them not to extend their present honeymoon cruise.

David, foolish boy, had gone to church that Sunday morning prepared to meet a perfectly new Amy. Had Mrs. Elliston appeared before him altered beyond recognition, it would not have taken him by the throat as did the sweet sight of her countenance, the same, line for line, as when last they bent over their drawing-boards together. Just a shade graver and less dreamy, as became a young wife. She looked bright—blooming, even—and Lalla said her gown was lovely. She had looked just as

pretty every Sunday for the last two years, as David could have told you, but without hitherto calling off the congregation's attention from the sermon. It was Lord Otho Dodbrooke's reported statement that "Mrs. Elliston was a beautiful little woman," that had brought home to Orestone that all this while it had been entertaining a social treasure unawares. For beauty, like talent, needs the endorsement of accepted critics to pass muster with the general public.

David, having inadvertently betrayed his intention of going to the dance at the Mount, his parents both backed out of the fatiguing ordeal. With Dave for their squire, Mrs. Churchstow for their chaperon (a mere social expression in this case), the girls would do very well.

Balls, for David, were, as we know, that peculiar penance which only pseudo-pleasure involves. But it was a cheap price to pay for the rare chance here afforded him of beholding Amy, to his heart's content, without offence even to his conscience.

For three years—the cardinal years of his life—he had looked at her thus; adoring, in young ideal fashion, the indescribable charm of her character, of which her beauty was to him

the direct expression. Only for a few fiery hours had he dreamt even of a nearer approach ; a brief eclipse of lucidity which had left him, as it found him, wholly devoted, utterly distant.

A few weeks ago, she and Elliston had never seen each other. " And six weeks hence, perhaps," said David's *bizarre* imagination, " I shall be the husband of some girl I have never met ! "

Mrs. Elliston wore her wedding-dress to-night ; and looked extremely well — flushed with the excitement of the novel responsibility ; and talking fast to hide a natural shyness, but taking too much thought for her guests to be carried away by gaiety herself. Everybody was admiring her till Lady Otho came in ; then Amy's light paled as a glow-worm's under the blaze of a chandelier.

Had the other been a blonde, there would have been no murder ; but there was just that absence of contrast in complexion and cast of feature to enforce comparisons ; and Lady Otho's advent anywhere was wont to extinguish far showier rivals than Elliston's little gipsy-rose of a wife. Nearly a head taller, she seemed to belong to another race, and hold an undisputed charter to parade her personal charms somewhat beyond the elastic limits social con-

vention allows. In black—say, dressed in a shower of lustrous beads, *decolletee* with a daring that took away your breath at first, dominant in stature, in coquetry, in diamonds, in calm effrontery, she was a queen who need fear nothing from pretty maids of honor. People approved Mrs. Elliston, then forgot all about her; whilst their eyes followed Lady Otho's snow-white shoulders and curious, graceful head about the room. A black swan among the goslings; the white-frocked virgins wise and foolish, stretching out their necks to look at her. She was generally taller than her partner, notably so than her husband, whose chief external characteristics were his short fat person, and determined affectation of stupidity. Elliston was the only dancer whose figure matched hers well, and she let him engage her repeatedly. Her high animal spirits, nimble tongue, and exuberant ways he thoroughly relished. Indeed, David's were the only eyes in the room that rested disaffectedly on this frisky society goddess, in her mazy progress round the room with her willing conductor.

"Splendid woman, Lady Otho—splendid," burst out, as to himself, David's neighbor, a young naval lieutenant, completely overcome by

his feelings. David mumbled assent, but his honest puritan soul rose up in flat rebellion at the slavish homage paid to this meretricious piece of goods, under whose resplendent exterior lurked (he chose to believe) a shallow, vulgar, disingenuous spirit.

"There they go again," ejaculated the lieutenant disconsolately, as a fresh waltz struck up; the signal for Elliston to lead off once more with his distinguished guest. "She seems uncommonly partial to him for a partner." The haughty beauty had mortally offended the young officer by cheating him of a promised dance.

"Most people like him," said David, idly.

"Except those who don't," rejoined the sulker, viciously. "He must be the very devil to come into collision with. You heard about his chucking the sailor overboard at Arran the other day?"

"No," said David, incredulously.

"Joe Mansel—he's a nasty-tempered chap himself—and Elliston had a high-handed way that led to some words between them. One day, on deck, Elliston tossed him back a plate or something he brought him, telling him to clean it properly. The man insolently threw it into the sea. Elliston thereupon pitched him after the plate before you could look round.

The fellow couldn't swim ; and had a narrow shave of his life."

David listened, still sceptically inclined ; the other continued : " One of the yachtsmen fished him out ; but he and the *Watersprite* parted company. Mansel threatened to prosecute ; but not one of the men would bear witness against Elliston, so the summons fell through, or the fellow was bought off, and the affair passed over as a joke."

David was thinking what a very disagreeable thing it would have been for Amy had the offender been drowned.

Male gossips, when ill-natured, leave women far behind. The jealous lieutenant could not sufficiently bespatter the man who had profited by the perfidy of his promised partner. He was talking nonsense, and David edged away from him, and drifted about to where Amy was doing the agreeable to the more tedious guests ; too self-occupied they to perceive (as David did) that her gaiety was put on, her fluent conversation a little forced, whilst something painful troubled and distracted her thoughts. At length a break in the circle brought him and her side by side.

" You look tired," he said.

" Not so tired as I am," she quickly replied ;

adding, of a sudden : "yes, perhaps I will go now and have some supper. David, you can take me down."

He gave her his arm silently. He had seen her decline half-a-dozen proffered escorts, anxious first to provide for the marshalling of her guests. It was no compliment to him that was intended now ; and if he failed to understand her motive-impulse, it was only until they entered the supper-room, whither Elliston, with Lady Otho, had just preceded them, and were conspicuous figures at the head of the table interchanging jests, repartees, innuendos, with a ready freedom amazing to David's boyish inexperience.

She was not half so pretty as Amy, and she had neither modesty, delicacy, nor a sensitive intelligence to hamper her exuberant nature. But she knew what she wanted : to be admired, at not too respectful a distance, and to be incessantly amused ; knew, too, how to get it. Perhaps Elliston suited her mood a trifle too aptly ; but she had a safeguard sense of the social distance between them (of which he was naively oblivious), entitling her at any moment, if it should come to that, to baffle him by a sudden haughty reserve, or annihilate him by a public snub.

David, Amy, Elliston himself, knew perfectly

well that the flirtation now in swing with the master of the Mount she was carrying on with somebody else yesterday, and would begin with another to-morrow. Lady Otho was Lady Otho. Her husband, so universally described as "Not such a fool as he looks," that it stuck to him as a nickname, beheld with shrewd and philosophic unconcern. She could sail very near the wind indeed. Lalla and Eveleen watched as at a game of skill, taking in the whole situation, and telegraphing across the table to each other that it was childish of Amy to mind, and to show it betrayed an awful want of social tact. But David raged inwardly at the light-hearted pair. Well might Amy be thinking :

"Just so he looked at me; so his thoughts followed me in a crowd, because they must, exactly as if no one else was there. So his eyes said, without a word, that there was no foolish or dangerous thing he could not do to win the least little reward—his merest glance, his idle-sounding talk, charged with meaning. See how he plays with her glove that has fallen. . . ."

Elliston, in whom, whatever his faults, in such matters there was no guile, was merely enjoying, without any needless reserve, the agreeable proximity of this noted beauty, whose social distinction, due to her marriage with

Lord Otho, counted for very little in her attraction for him. It was not very considerate, not the behavior of a man of delicate feeling, but even David felt that to reproach Amy's husband with lack of the fine shades of sentiment would be like finding fault with an oak for its acorns, that they are not hothouse grapes.

But it pained her, and him for her sake, as he saw that she only made a pretence of eating supper, and that her talk was mechanical, her ear involuntarily rivetted by such snatches as reached it from time to time of the rollicking gaiety of the two at the head of the table.

"I hope you don't belong to those men who can't bear to see women eat," Lady Otho was saying, warning him that she was exceedingly hungry; "for I do not pretend to be an angel, in that or any other respect."

Elliston reassured her.

"I know very little about angels myself," he said, as he replenished the champagne glasses; "but I fancy some of them would be glad to change places with some of us down below in this wicked world, you know, if they could."

"I never envy them anything," said Lady Otho, "except their wings."

"Not to fly off from here, I hope," he returned, gallantly.

She laughed with a glance of ineffable coquetry. Her bracelet had slipped from its clasp, and she must let him very leisurely refasten the gold band on her beautiful arm, bare to the shoulder, but such a wonderfully white, full and rounded arm, that you might forgive her for displaying it, and him for his demonstrative rejoinder, inaudible to David, but Amy had read the motion of his lips:

"Wings are their arms. It is they who should envy you."

Amy had risen.

"Let us go back to the ballroom now, David," she said, quietly.

There she was quickly caught away from him in the whirl. The music had struck up again; the room was a giddy, waltzing throng. David glanced at his programme. They were only half-way through. Never had the preternatural length of the ordeal of pleasure so forcibly struck him. The trashy tunes, gay flutter, gaudy dresses, artificial flowers, and terpsichorean antics filled him with loathing, simply. He felt as might a sick man dragged to the banquet of Lucullus. There is some "soul of sadness" in things joyful, to the joyous even; how much more to David in a fit of the blues! He fled a moment from the impertinence of

mirth into the hall. Three mortal hours of it yet before him; his sisters, he knew well, would stay to the last chord.

As he loitered down the passage, he perceived that the front door stood open; there seemed some slight confusion and commotion among the group of servants there assembled, followed by sounds of actual scuffling outside, some rough words, and extreme discomfiture of the domestics. David stepped to the door.

"What's the matter?" he asked of one whom he knew.

"It's a drunken man, sir, come and rang at the bell; says he wants to see the master. He won't go, and we can't get rid of him. There he stands. He's a mulatto or a negro, and his language is awful."

"Can't you turn him out between you?"

"We don't dare go near him, sir; he's got a knife, and swears he'll stick it into the first man of us that touches him."

David peered forward, suddenly mindful of Mr. Masters' lapsed *protege*. By the dim light of the Chinese lanterns he thought he recognized the party, and it struck him that Elliston had him to thank for this unseasonable intrusion. David had told the vagabond where to find his old skipper. He was clearly the worse

for liquor, and further maddened by the servants, whose threats and gibes had infuriated him, and unloosed a startling vocabulary.

To reason here would be vain ; and David saw the flash of cold steel.

"Send for Mr. Elliston," he said blankly.

Some one had already done so, and the next moment that gentleman came out to the front door.

"What on earth is all this ?" he demanded, in amazement.

"This drunken rascal, sir, keeps ringing at the bell, and asking for you, sir ; and we don't one of us like to go near him, because of his knife ?"

Elliston advanced into the portico, his keen eyes fixed on the offender, who stood scowling, sulky, and fierce, but momentarily cowed, as it were, by Elliston's towering figure and cool aspect.

The mutual scrutiny lasted, it seemed to David, a surprisingly long while.

"Why, confound me ! if it isn't one of my old crew," Elliston let fall, at length in an undertone to David, then aloud in a stern and ringing voice : "Why, Monkey Ned ! did you suppose I had forgotten you, man ? or what in

thunder, sir, do you mean by coming before me like this?"

The man, taken aback, his passion abated, stared helplessly around.

"Didn't I tell you," said Elliston, coming down the steps and placing himself unhesitatingly within easy reach of the terrifying weapon, "that if ever again you presented yourself to me in this condition, I'd have no more to do with you. And you ought to know I'm a man of my word."

The fellow, dumb and abashed, his eyes on the ground, fidgetted; impressed, bewildered, and uncertain.

"Upon my soul," Elliston resumed, with emphasis, "if I pass over this, it shall be for the last time. Drop that knife, now. Don't be afraid, nobody shall lay a finger on you. But we're not in Samoa, man; and if you hark back on the old games, it's not I who can stop the police from clapping you into jail."

The culprit obeyed with the conscious-stricken look of a dog caught thieving. Elliston picked up the knife and put it in his pocket; then resumed in a changed tone of blunt kindness:

"Well, I'll overlook this; and you shall stay here with me and help with the boats—if you've

a mind to, and behave yourself—until you can do better. There, go duck your head under the pump, man; one of my crew shall find you a new rig at the lodge. Don't touch him, any one of you, or meddle with him in any way and he'll be all right."

His authority acted like a charm; the unpleasant row seemed in a fair way to be promptly and harmlessly terminated.

People were asking for Elliston in the ball-room; he reflected a moment, then his eyes rested on David, and he made a confidential appeal to him aside.

"You would oblige me very much by staying to see that my orders are carried out. See that they let him alone, and he'll be as quiet as they. I fear the poor devil's a confirmed drunkard, but he seems down in his luck just now, and I'll not throw him out of doors to-night. And I don't want this fuss to come to Mrs. Elliston's ears in the very middle of our house-warming. It would upset her—make her nervous."

The conversion of the homicidal maniac into a tractable vassal seemed complete; and David, mollified towards Elliston by his thought of Amy and his good-nature to his nigger, and feeling secretly a little guilty as the involuntary

author of the mischief, promised to see the good work carried through.

Not sorry for the pretext for absenting himself awhile from the mirth he could not share, he marshalled Ned (who had evidently been more mad than drunk, and, half-sobered and wholly ashamed, suffered himself to be ordered about like a faithful hound, comfortably persuaded it was for his material advantage) to the lodge. and superintended his toilet.

In less than an hour's space Ned's keeper brought him back on the scene, washed, brushed, and becomingly attired in a brand new sailor garb, and left him making himself useful as linkman, carefully lighting the departing guests to their carriages; almost touching in his officious efforts to atone by his services for his inexcusable mode of self-presentation.

CHAPTER XI.

MONKEY NED.

DAVID, when he got to bed, dreamt bad dreams, as it were his waking thoughts grotesquely mixed—distorted into a monstrous compound of the ghastly and the ludicrous.

He dreamt that he, David Ferrier, was committing a burglary at the Mount, and, breaking into the drawing-room, found Monkey Ned, the Samoan, trying to murder Amy. He sprang on him and held him down; and the livid, contorted, upturned features of the man he was strangling had changed to those of Amy's husband.

He woke with a nasty jarring impression he thought to shake off by rising, dressing, and walking the hilly country for two hours in the chill, dull morning; presenting himself at the breakfast table with aching limbs and a fagged yellow face that made him a quizzing-stock for his sparkling sisters in the intervals they could

spare from reviewing the bows on Lady Otho's shoes and her bird-of-paradise fan.

David was still haunted by the double picture of that blatant, *insouciant* flirtation between the society-journal enchantress and her boon-fellow, and Amy's little face of pained wonder and pathetic attempts to smile. His innate fair-mindedness forbade him the solace of depreciating Elliston. The man's uncommon force of nature and attraction were patent and genuine. But how about their application? How if he undervalued his prize?—if his grosser, untempered, despotic, masculine selfishness drove him to neglect or to slight her, torment her by his indifference, his infidelities? An old trite tale; but its forecast here raised the ancestral savage in the good Christian, David.

“If I thought he would make her suffer—not caring but for his cursed pleasure—I could shoot him as soon as talk to him.”

Fudge, boy! Tragedies of the hearth play themselves out, but mostly undramatically, at least in the upper class. Imagination, running on, prefigured for him the real, the matter-of-fact probabilities ahead: Amy disparaged, unconsidered, wronged, but loving and heart-sore under the brave front he knew she would present to the last, and himself condemned to look on

with a gag in his mouth and his hands tied.

Ugly cobwebs of the brain! swept away in the morning only to weave themselves again during the night. Then the next afternoon he called at Sunnyside, and felt unutterably ashamed of his absurd cogitations. Amy, who had been lunching and paying calls with her mother, was there still. Elliston had gone up the estuary by the steamer that plies daily between Orestone and Queensbridge, on business in the latter town, and was to call for her presently on his way up from the pier. She was in good spirits and gaily communicative. No doubt she had come to taking the common-sense view of the Lady Otho episode, the heroine's departure for London yesterday having, perhaps, powerfully aided.

David inquired how their interesting colored domestic was getting on.

"Oh, it is quite a story," said Amy. "First of all, what do you think? George and I very nearly came to quarrelling about him yesterday. I happened to look into the boat-house, where Ned was cleaning out the dingey, and I had a long talk with him. George had told me his history, and I felt so sorry for him in this over-civilized country, where sleeping out of doors is a penal offence—as sorry as I should for myself,

stranded among Solomon islanders, where murder is none. I spoke very seriously to him about his drinking, and he listened so patiently, and the tears rolled down his cheeks, and he took the pledge solemnly in his own way: 'Strike me dead if I ever touch drop spirits'. I am sure he will try and keep his word. Only I have made George promise to lock up everything stronger than lemonade—to make quite sure, you know. I feel certain there is a great deal of good in Ned; but George says they are never to be trusted, and has made me promise never to talk to the poor fellow or go near him when he is not by."

"And quite right, too," said Mrs. Beverley, in hearty approval.

David also felt Elliston, whose figure at this moment was seen approaching the house, partly reinstated in his good graces.

Amy's narrative was not yet over. "I promised," she said, "and there, I have broken my word already!"

Here Elliston joined them. His wife waited till he had settled down in his chair, then began to him with playful contrition:

"George, I have a confession to make; you are not to be vexed with me, but I have been talking to Ned again."

Elliston *was* vexed, the contraction of his lips and brow betrayed it; but Amy went on rapidly and confidently: "Only hear how it happened, and you will own I could not possibly help myself.

"The moment I had parted from you at the pier I found I had stupidly forgotten my card-case. I had to go back home for it; there was just time before lunch. As I opened the hall-door the first thing I saw was Ned; and what else, do you suppose? Why that cask of spirits of wine you ordered and that came this morning had actually been left standing there in the hall. I cannot think how we never noticed it as we left the house. But now, I recollect; you called me out the other way, by the garden, to show me Madge's new kennel."

"Well," said Elliston, with slight impatience.

"Well," said Amy, "there stood the cask, and there was Ned on his knees before it with a tumbler of the horrid stuff in his hand, just ready to begin upon it, when I surprised him.

"Now, I felt," resumed Amy, "that we were the real people to blame for placing temptation in his way. He fortunately had not tasted a drop. I reproached him for breaking his promise to me; and I never in my life saw anyone so penitent. He fell on his knees—to me this

time, not to the cask—and implored me to have the fire-water put out of his reach, to help him to keep his word. Of course I saw it safely stowed away downstairs before I came on here.”

Elliston, while Amy was speaking, was listening with a tense attention, that relaxed suddenly on his becoming aware that David was observing him curiously.

“Raw spirits of wine!” ejaculated Mrs. Beverley, horrified. Do you mean to say he would drink that?”

“Oh, nothing comes amiss to these niggers,” said Elliston.

“It was a narrow escape for him,” said Amy, concernedly. “I daresay he could not tell it from whisky. It would have killed him to a certainty.”

“It was a narrow escape for you, Amy,” said Elliston, emphatically. “I can assure you my blood ran cold at the thought of your coming upon that brute—as you very well might had you been a few minutes later. Those fellows will go at it, mad, drunk, or dead.”

Amy shook her head with provoking feminine inconsequence and obstinacy. “I don’t believe he would hurt me, somehow. I am not afraid of him a bit. I don’t think he has always

been kindly treated, or he would not be so grateful for a few kind words."

Elliston naturally dismissed this view as silly and womanish.

"Decidedly I must get rid of him," he said. "I can't possibly let you try your hand on such a ruffianly subject. Don't be afraid, Mrs. Beverley, I'll take care of that in future. Ned's a tidy sailor, and I'll find him a berth on some ship that'll take him home to Somoa."

They left. When a few minutes later David wished Mrs. Beverley good-bye, he perceived her glance of marked disapproval. He believed they had been talking in the meantime, he had no idea what about; and saw, to his confusion that he had betrayed his absence of mind, which she ascribed to sentimental causes, and blamed him accordingly.

It was well for him that she could not read his inmost thoughts, or she would never speak to him again, his conscience told him, as he left that house.

Was his love, so divinely pure, turning him to a bloodhound or a demon? he asked himself, dazedly, as he aimlessly bestrode the long, narrow street of Orestone, and the rambling, diverging courts and alleys. Unconscious, poisonous jealousy fostering malignant suspicions?

He threw himself on a bench on a bit of green slope—an unenclosed space, with a semi-circle of villas above and slate cottage roofs below, just big enough to make grazing-ground for a horse and a donkey, and a nursery walk—a shady and dull resting-place for loiterers. There he brought himself and his evil thoughts to book.

“What made me watch Elliston as I did whilst Amy was speaking? As sure as my hat is on my head, he left that cask in Ned’s way on purpose.

“He was disappointed that the rascal had not destroyed himself on this convenient opportunity.

“He has private reasons of his own for wishing Ned out of the way, and yet there is something links them together.”

Well, Elliston’s past might not be spotless; but how many of the winners in life’s race (and on the whole he had won) have a white record? David understood, through Mrs. Beverley, in a general way, that he had made confession to them of rough years lived and strange company kept, and a wild scrape or two. Now that he had married into good society and found acceptance there, Ned was an unpleasant reminder at his elbow of his early days of rude

struggle, of which he would fain be rid. But to resort to such devilish means, a man must either be an incarnate fiend or in a desperate strait.

David's head swam; then came a mournful return of lucidity, laying bare the fiend in himself that could give birth to such monstrous imaginings.

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He was still there when, half-an-hour later, Ned, who had been sent into town on some errands, and was leisurely descending the green slope by the winding path leading from the upper to the lower road, passed the bench where he sat. He seemed pleased that David accosted him, and ready to enter into conversation. David asked him how he liked his place at the Mount.

"Mighty well," said he. "Plenty food to eat, good place to sleep, good clothes, and no too much work either."

"Then you'd like to stay where you're well off?"

He shook his head. "No right place for Monkey Ned. White servant fellows make game of him, my word! So better not stop more long than when Mr. Elliston lets me go."

"Mrs. Elliston is very kind to you?"

"Nobody ever speak Ned like that," said he, with a wistful, wondering air.

"Well," rejoined David, "Mr. Elliston will find you a ship sharp enough. I don't suppose he'll want to detain you a day against your will."

It would seem as if Ned had caught the involuntary irony of the young man's tone. His eye quickened.

"Aye," he said, hastily, "but he first pay me what he owe."

It instantly struck David that the man had betrayed a fact he wished to conceal.

"Mr. Elliston owe you money?" he repeated, with feigned incredulity, diplomatically—"a likely story!"

"He owe me five hundred pounds," said the man, angrily. "Say he hard up—he pay me by-and-by. Soon as I get my money I go home."

Oho! Some old, big debt; not so big as that, doubtless, but an account it was inconvenient to square. Was that why his existence was obnoxious to his creditor? A sordid explanation to an ugly mystery, if mystery there were, apart from David's fantastic brain.

"Suppose Elliston refuses to pay you, can you prove your claim?" he asked him, with pretended carelessness.

"He never refuse," said Ned, evasively.

"But say he does?"

"Then I take my money—if I find. I not steal if I take what is mine by right."

"Take care," said David, laughing outright, "he may have you up for theft."

"Aye, but he never do that."

"Why not?"

The man looked slightly uncomfortable, as at a dim suspicion he was being pumped, and there was a dash of cunning in his simplicity as he replied :

"Oh, because Mr. Elliston, he good man—he my old skipper, not like be so hard on Monkey Ned, his old shipmate. But I stop here too late, master—I go home now."

David did likewise, sombre and lurid fancies keeping at his heels like his shadow.

Elliston, downright, pleasant, plausible, generous, humane, as David knew him, had he another self, the dominant one, bound to prevail when they came into collision—the one for play, the other for work—and this other one unscrupulous, ruffianly, profligate, tainted by the spendthrift's dishonor, the easy cruelty and crime of a hardened conscience?—Amy none the less bound to him for their joint lives! More, he had won her deep true love, that

would always live on in some shape to torment her, she, whom he had perhaps married in blind submission to a passion as absolute as it is mostly ephemeral; his masterful nature become its own evil genius, habitually uncontrolled, and grown uncontrollable. If so, they were both to be pitied, since it lay not in his power to set things right.

"At this rate," thought David's other self, the prosy one, "I shall be in Colney Hatch before the week is out."

To restore himself to reason and common life, he spent the evening wrangling with his sisters about the new rules of lawn tennis. They were astonished at his novel heat on the subject, and before he knew he found himself let in for escorting them to a match that was coming off to-morrow at Queensbridge.

CHAPTER XII.

A LEE SHORE.

THE inherent weakness of David's character drove him, as the reader of spirit has pityingly seen, fatally into compromise. Organically unlucky, always the loser at business or pleasure, born one of the Hope-alls and Have-nothings in life's race, insolvent just now, he preferred to temporize with his fate rather than declare himself bankrupt and try a fresh start; perhaps with a furtive inkling that, for him, new roads could only lead up to new reverses.

He had lost his heart at Orestone; a wise youth would have shaken the dust from his feet and sailed round the world with Lord Otho, and found salvation in a host of new, if frivolous, impressions. The offer, verbally renewed through his father, had now first come to his sisters' ears, and he went up in their estimation with a bound. Even that daubing—good gracious! it was not to be despised, if it could lead up to this golden chance. Al-

ready they saw him returning, in a year, with a halo round his head, as bearing a rich cargo of gossip and scandal more precious than gold. Then for the fatted calf! They could respect, they could almost love their brother for it in advance.

Judge then of his fall when it transpired that he had replied with a final definite refusal, assigning no reason (good reason there could not be). Idiot! Idiot!

David had not a single word to say for himself. A month ago his mind was fully made up to take the voyage. Our gross inward vision often fails to discern the motive secrets of things seemingly perversely done or left undone by ourselves. Looking back, we say "fatality," and pass on.

He was the only loser. Lord Otho had done the civil cheaply, to a youth whose father had been of use to him, in a business way, and might now employ the opportunity over again for obliging some one else, securing perhaps a better artist. David, grown to a dull and profitless existence, meagre in all but painful impressions, had let his chance pass. To such it does not present itself twice. In yielding to the voice without a name within that bid him wait, he was acting like the born dupe that he was.

For self-respect's sake he flung himself again into his painting work, more strenuously even than when he had Amy for a fellow-student. But he no longer sat at home to grind. He became a wild man of the tors, the sea-caves, the headlands, making studies from nature, in her ever-varying moods, steeping himself with the spirit of the coast scenery, up and down, heedless of wind and weather, sometimes, of life and limb; expending much and winning something, discovering unexplored and barely accessible eyries, surprising rare points of view, wondrous effects of sunshine and storm, spending whole days in rocky wildernesses where cormorants and gannets and distant sails represented life; whole nights on the sea, going out with the fishermen, his brain stung to a tyrannic resolve inducing a stubborn defiance of the pains of sea-sickness; an ordeal endured till he seemed to come within measurable distance of partly wearing out that incurable infirmity. He was seldom at home to the regular meals; his family left him to his fad. If he chose to peg away all day at bad sketches—"stuff for worse pictures," as Barbara cruelly put it—well, it amused him and hurt nobody. He came and went, unquestioned, unmolested; the sincerity of domestic relations sparing the others the necessity of

politely feigning the least interest in his proceedings.

Such passionate toil could leave no student exactly where it found him. David gained somewhat in dexterity and insight, and each little advance helped to take the shine out of the puerile notion hitherto entertained that his liking implied a faculty, or the seed of a faculty,—the deluded days when he thought he could paint. His taste was strong as ever, but he saw it was sterile. Why should the muse select him for special favor because he adored her? Did Amy? Why should Nature's law in art be kinder than her law in love?

Yet he remained rooted to art's service, though oppressed by the growing certainty of his natural impotence. It was David's way—his weakness, and, perhaps, his strength too. Did it make Amy less dear to him that she was lost to him even as a friend? Would he rush the less readily to do her service, if need were?

David's inexpressive exterior and ineffective love-making were the counterpart of his labored, well-meant, but abortive painting efforts. Excellently inspired, but wanting in that magic link with the material which confers on them an active, exchangeable value. Constant, loyal, with a tremendous store of passionate energy

for the loved object; many an idler, weather-cock, and charlatan has put him to shame in successful achievement.

A fortnight of this arduous out-of-door life, when often from one day's end to another he did not exchange a word with a human creature, had done him good—tamed his heart and cooled his head. He renewed his visits to Sunnyside. Mrs. Beverley, who was lonely, encouraged him to repeat them. Eveleen, indecorous and unashamed, where it was safe, announced that now the daughter was married and done for, David was falling in love with the mother.

It is said that two fools quickly understand each other: how much the better when, as with these two, their foible is the same?

"You ought to have been a woman, David," she said to him once in jest, half sadly, "you have a golden heart."

David's Amy-worship remained part of the substance of his mind, and Sunnyside, where their acquaintance had ripened, was a treasure-house of associations as vivid as a lock of her hair, or her portrait. It was full of mementoes with power to revive past impressions. To seek them was a tempting dram, enervating and hurtful in the long run. Healthier the tonic bitters of absence. David should have

thrown himself into the cock-pit of life, even if only to be worsted perpetually, as one ill-equipped for the strife, whose hand is neither strong nor cunning, and shrinks from indignant weapons, may look for ridicule and failure.

Still he had better, and so Mrs. Beverley told him—better for his own sake; though she acquitted him of the shadow of a morbid, illicit thought, or even of brooding over his ill-hap. He neither sought nor avoided meeting Amy; he spoke of her quite naturally and unconstrainedly, with brother-like interest, showing himself past the moonstruck phase.

One day at dusk, he had just passed in at the Sunnyside gates, and stepped aside into the shadow of the elms to look at a large moth that was clinging to a tree-trunk, when he heard the house-door shut and saw Elliston coming away. He was alone, and his countenance and expression were set and preoccupied, as he went abstractedly striking at the loose stones in his path with his walking-stick. He looked harassed, irritated, dangerous. Woe to the dolt who should cross him just now! Well that Amy was one to wile the savageness out of a Tartar, if by chance she had caught one, thought David, dimly.

“Hullo, Ferrier,” Elliston had seen him and

hailed him, as he neared the gates, "what are you prowling over there?"

"Such a huge death's-head moth—there he goes," said David, as the winged monster took flight, whirring away over their heads.

"Aye," said Elliston, absently. "And you, you've never come to look us up at the Mount," he added, casually.

"No," David brought out, awkwardly, "but I'm going to call; when's a good time to find you?"

"Oh, any time; come to-morrow if you like, you'll find us in, I daresay," he answered, carelessly, as he passed out at the gates.

In Mrs. Beverley's face David seemed to find the reflection of her son-in-law's perturbed expression.

"I met Elliston"—it slipped out at once—"he looked bothered about something or other."

"Yes." Mrs. Beverley paused, hesitatingly, then added: "He made me promise not to tell, but I can see no possible harm in telling you, who, of course, will never repeat——"

Be that as it might, she would, obviously, have told it.

"Well," said David, "the grave has told secrets before now, but not I—having no one to tell them to."

"It is a very commonplace secret," she said, "and there may be no ground for my fear :— that he has been going on rather too fast with the furnishing and other expenses, and that the yacht in particular is more than they can afford. But they are planning another cruise already— before the season ends! George is so open-handed, and Amy so inexperienced. Just now he wanted a loan of five hundred pounds. Well, David, you needn't start," she said, irritated by his movement, "it's not for past or present expenditure that he wants it at all, but for a good investment that has been put in his way, certain to yield a quick profit, which would come very conveniently at this stage."

"Well?" said David.

"It was out of my power to make the advance," she answered. "The expenses connected with the wedding have drained my exchequer, and, having only my annuity, I have no means of raising the sum. So I told him."

David was silent. Mrs. Beverley mused on aloud :

"They can hardly have got into money difficulties already. I trust not, for they depress a man and make household life difficult. Amy will do her best, but we all make mistakes, and if they have started their expenditure at a rate

above their income, they have put their foot in a quagmire; but it is impossible that it can have sunk deep. You see he gets the Mount for so low a rent that he may have miscalculated the proportionate cost of keeping it up. They will have to draw in, but there can be no serious embarrassment involved, unless, indeed, he has old debts," she let fall, involuntarily.

"That doesn't seem likely," David rejoined, hesitatingly, Ned's story, which he had scouted as a myth, coming back on his mind. "He didn't mention any, I suppose?"

"I didn't torment him with questions about his affairs," said Mrs. Beverley. "I shall never play the part of the lecturing mother-in-law; and if I had had the money he should have had it. As I had not, all I could do was——" She stopped; there was no reason whatever why she should prate of all this to David, who was not really her son, as she seemed tardily to remind herself, concluding briefly; "to consent to help him to set things right in another way," David taking the hint to turn the subject.

"Have they still got that colored sailor, Ned of Samoa, at the Mount?" he asked her, presently.

"Oh, yes; they keep him on as out-of-door servant, to help with the boats. Amy talks as

if he was quite a reformed character. She says George is so careless, he always forgets to lock up the wine; so she has taken that matter in hand, keeps a strict eye on Ned's enemy, and has actually gone round on his behalf to all the retail dealers in Orestone, asking them not to sell spirits to him. He is quite willing; and by this means he keeps perfectly well-behaved. She declares he is at least as civilized as his fellow-servants; only they tease him and then he loses his temper. But Amy says it is always their fault."

David, as an outsider, of course knew more of the particulars of Elliston's expenditure than Mrs. Beverley herself. His sisters had talked a good deal of the extravagant cost he had incurred in making the Mount fit to live in, in the housewarming, and maintaining the *Watersprite*—quoted by them as evidence of how well off he must be; and till to-day David had accepted the signification.

The unluckiest people have their little windfalls; and that evening's post brought David a most-unlooked-for bit of good news. A large oil painting of his, representing the famous Orestone rock, on view for the last three months at the obscure Art Exhibition at Queensbridge now about to close, and priced by him at fifty pounds

—sardonically persuaded it would be a drug in the market at fifty shillings, the price of the frame—had positively found a purchaser! A rich tallow-chandler, retiring from business and Orestone, had a fancy to take with him this most obtrusive reminder of the place. It was a staring likeness of the striking headland in question, with the ruined fort near the North Scar in the foreground, and a peep of the roofs of the said tradesman's villa residence introduced. The price was no matter to the purchaser, who went about boasting he had bought the largest picture in the Queensbridge Exhibition, a *quietus* for poor David's nascent self-approbation when this came round to his ears. But the receipt of the check that night afforded him a high satisfaction. He forgot the faults in his picture—the bad perspective, crude coloring, overloading of detail; his luck seemed too good to be true. He went up the creek by steamer to Queensbridge on the morrow to cash the check: and not till the notes were handed him across the counter was he quit of a lurking apprehension that it was all a hoax of Barbara's to make an April fool of him out of season.

CHAPTER XIII.

DESPERATE REMEDIES.

As David stepped off the Queensbridge steamer on the landing stage at Orestone he bethought him of Elliston's invitation yesterday to pay his overdue call at the Mount. Not wishing to make himself conspicuous by neglect of the usages of polite society, he decided to look in there on his way back. Both husband and wife were at home.

Hardly had the drawing-room door closed on the servant who announced him than David was reminded that your evil genius never really deserts you. His had prompted him to drop in upon them at what was obviously the worst moment he could have chosen—the heat of a conjugal dispute; essentially petty, no doubt, but taking absurd proportions at the time, by contrast with excessive fondness eclipsed.

Elliston, stirred to the dregs, and scouting good manners, barely shook hands, and turning away, stood at the window, looking out moodily.

Amy, despite the force of breeding and habit, surprised David by showing herself almost equally incapable of self-control. She was of a dull pallor; her eyes dry and bright and feverish; her manner constrained and unhinged.

And David had to sit between the irate figure of the master of the house and his troubled, distracted bride and talk about the weather, silently cursing his unlucky star that had played him this trick. He looked blankly round the room, as though for help and hints. In the long pauses the wind howled dismally in the chimney, thorny twigs beat against the window pane, and you could hear the waves plash against the scar below the garden: sounds that might have enhanced a sense of cheerful comfort indoors, but that fell on a mortally awkward silence, and awkward speech.

"Surely they must recover their tempers and their manners in a moment, and take pity on me," thought the wretched guest, to whom every minute seemed unconscionably protracted, as the gloom on Elliston's face deepened to desperation, and Amy, whilst mechanically replying to David's remarks, seemed but half awake to his presence, under some freezing mental pressure she could not withstand.

"By G—!" thought David, "if they don't stand on ceremony, why should I? I shall take French leave." He gave them five minutes' grace by the clock. Five awful, interminable minutes, during which he ran on about the Art Exhibition at Queensbridge, and the sale of his picture there, as the safest subject he could think of.

Amy's presence always vivified his perceptions; and that domestic scene, trivial, sordid perhaps, in its significance though he never doubted but it was, yet took effect on his memory like some grim and uncanny picture, seen once in childhood, that leaves a lifelong impression.

Elliston, with his wild hawk's eye and air of reckless defiance, was like a hunted creature run down (could Amy really have been so, aggravating as that?). His roving glance rested on the masts of the *Watersprite*, lying at anchor, with a flash of impatience, as of the seafarer, fretted by the silken chains of citizen life, yearning to his lawless element, tongue-tied, for fear of saying what he would repent. Amy, like a statue awaking, moved to depths invisible. David, though he thought he knew her well, could make nothing of her face. He tried to read there wounded womanly dignity

and pride, but the language was undecipherable; the extraordinary look in her eyes inscrutable like that of an infant's, astray from worlds unknown to us, born into regions strange to it. And the drear, silent room, a room full of laughter and frolic the other night! Crackling of thorns under the pot! Those three oppressed, unhappy figures had much more abiding reality and significance. The five minutes had expired at last, and David stood up; neither gods nor men should detain him another moment, after so inhospitable a reception. Husband and wife did not try.

"Are you going yachting again immediately?" he asked, just to break the awkwardness of his abrupt leave-taking by saying something. The two exchanged a quick, strange glance.

"We do not know," said Amy, quietly.

"Give me," thought David, as he shook hands, "ghosts in a vault for company sooner than a newly-married couple fallen out." Then the touch of Amy's ice-cold fingers sent a chill to his heart.

At the last moment Elliston had recovered himself, seeming ashamed of his rudeness. "I'll walk a bit of the way with you," he said to

David, as if in half apology for his neglect of the forms of common civility.

At the door Elliston turned a moment towards Amy, with an involuntary glance back of sharp scrutiny and covert mistrust that was almost apprehension. Her gaze was singular. To David it seemed to say that before he came in Elliston must have forgotten himself unpardonably ; yet how she loved him !

David breathed more freely out of the house, and, anxious to meet his companion's approaches half-way, began about the first thing that came into his head.

" I saw your fellow Ned at the pier just now," he said, about to add that he had also seen a local watermen, addicted to liquor, press the contents of his flask upon the would-be teetotalter, but the other cut him short with an interjection.

" Ned—curse him ! " exclaimed Elliston, devoutly ; then, breaking into a laugh, he went on : " I can't tell you what fresh trouble he has been here. My wife—well, what must she do but take it into her head that he had a grudge against me, and that I was in danger from his violence. All because she chanced to come on us once two or three days ago, when I had put him in a rage by pulling him up for some

impertinence. Why, you've seen yourself how the beggar obeys me like a dog. But it gave her a fright, and as she fancies she has some influence over him, she could not rest till she had interrogated him, hoping to work on his mind, or somehow set her fears at rest, although I had more than once strictly cautioned her against interfering with him in any way. I was annoyed. The fellow's mischievous, or might become so at any moment. I want to get rid of him."

"Why have you kept him so long?"

Elliston hesitated a moment.

"Well, the truth is, years ago we went shares in a business venture," he confessed, confidentially. "I lost sight of him after, at a time when I was somewhat in his debt. It went about that he was drowned; but he had got into some scrape and was hiding. He hasn't a bit of paper to show, but his claim is just, and he served me a good turn once. Why the devil must he down upon me at a moment when I don't know where to look for a five pound note? By the way, I suppose *you* could not let me have fifty pounds for a week or two?"

"Fifty pounds?"

"It would square that account for me, and

we should be rid of a nuisance ; I don't like to send him away without his due. Mrs. Elliston's apprehensions are absurd. Ned would never dare lift a finger against me—I fancy he thinks I'm bullet proof. But his presence about is injurious to Mrs. Elliston, who is unwell and nervous. If only for her sake I am anxious to get quit of him for good, with as little delay as possible."

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David entered Lannacombe with his purse as light as when he started for Queensbridge. He did not repent the service done. The domestic cloud would lift as quickly as it had arisen. He saw it all now. Amy had disobeyed her husband's express injunctions, and there had been an explosion ; but she would see she had been wrong, and forgive the ill-temper she had provoked ; she was not prone to exaggerate things. Elliston would pay off his importunate hanger-on. Fifty was a likelier sum than the other to represent the claim of his former shipmate ; and Ned would go home to the antipodes, to the general satisfaction.

Next day his sisters, those fair newsmongers, regaled him at lunch with two bits of gossip. Firstly, the *Watersprite* was getting ready for

sailing, but it was not certain whether the cruise would come off. Amy was not very well. Secondly, that Monkey Ned had got into a brawl last night at the Turk's Head, and the police were after him for assault and disorderly conduct ; but he had taken to his heels, after his exploit, and not shown himself again at the Mount or in Orestone ; thus conveniently relieving his master of himself and his importunity at once. David wondered what would be done with the fifty pounds.

David the dreamer had his reactionary moods of hard sense ; one was now upon him. Contemplating his recent behavior, the facility with which his first earnings had transferred themselves from his pocket to Elliston's, his absorption in what, to speak leniently, was no business of his, the misunderstandings between Amy and her husband, the waste and worse of his time, his procrastination in dangle on here—he blushed for shame, and felt that his family's most merciless disdain was too good for his real deserts. Love, the highest, the purest, as lord of all, is no more to be trusted than other despots. He must shake off its absolute rule. He would go from Orestone, and all that could remind him of Amy—past and present.

But he could not beg his way, like the Neds

of the world, and his father, a good-natured man, but who stuck to his principles, and forcibly objected from the first to his son's daubing craze by rigidly restricting his allowance.

David's personal estate consisted in the sum of three hundred pounds, a godmother's legacy, invested in what were then the Three per Cents. His determination was taken that same day: to realize his principal, go up to London and study there a year, or two, or three, under new auspices, new masters. He would live on his own money, and not ask his father to pay his way in a course he thoroughly disapproved.

It was going into exile, and the resolve, summarily acted on (that very evening he posted his letter of instructions to the bank), brought a morrow of bitter and gloomy contemplations. He spent it in a farewell ramble on the perilous slopes under Roden Down, too restless and excited to sketch or paint.

The end of that day of solitude and depression found him further than ever from peace with himself. He would not go home to dinner; he felt as though he would rather never see his family again than expose himself at that moment to that banjo-twanging, quizzing, bank-holiday atmosphere—to seek it was as impossible as to walk into the stifling fumes of a mephitic gas.

He lingered on the undercliff as the early darkness gathered over sea and land.

That was the wildest point of the wild stretch of down. He lay extended upon a clump of thrift near the coastguard's path, a few hundred yards from Ralph's Hole. If he turned his head he could see the briar-choked mouth of the old smuggler's cave from where he lay, watching the distant black outline of Neptune's crown growing dimmer and undefined, and the waves plashing at the foot of the undermined cliff; as averse to retracing his steps as a boy who has run away from school.

A day of slender fare, hard muscular exertion, and chagrin within. He was dead tired now and his spirit flagged, whilst he hated and despaired of himself for collapsing. He had lain there for two hours, like a stone, feeling, as even young men may feel, as if he had literally thrown off the burden of life, and would thank the destroying angel who should pass and save him from having to shoulder it again.

Perhaps he had slept, when—what is it that distinguishes the footfall of the human animal, or the sound of his slightest movement, from all other sounds?—David started nervously at an imperceptible rustle as he would not at the trample of a stray bull, or the stampede of a

hundred rabbits or flight of a flock of curlews, or the fall of a boulder of rock.

Raising his head he saw something move in the gloom, in the direction of the smuggler's cave, a figure clambering monkey-like on hands and knees up the cliff-side to the white-stone track: some belated, indefatigable tourist, or the dead smuggler's ghost.

If the latter, he had changed color in the nether world.

"Ned or the devil," thought David. "Aha, poor chap; he's been hiding from the constables;" and with the natural sympathy of one miserable sinner for another when justice is dogging his footsteps, David, himself of a truant disposition, as we know, was feeling in his pocket for some silver.

"Hullo, Ned, man!" he hailed him as he rose to his feet. "It's a friend; don't be skeered." The runaway nearly dropped with fright at the surprise. "I shan't peach on you, nor stop you; come here—there's no gammon." As the fugitive hesitated, mistrustful—"I'm not a beak," David told him. "Let them do their business. Here's half-a-crown, it's all I've got, and off with you to Plymouth, Ned; and get out of this country as fast as you can. It's not for such as you."

Ned saw the silver glitter, and drew near, like a blue-bottle to the candle flame.

"Has Elliston paid you?" asked David, suddenly curious.

Ned's expression was a singular mixture of animal simplicity and human craft.

"No—yes," he said, confusedly; "we settle it, master."

"He has settled with you?"

"He meet me by-and-by on Roden Down, and bring the money he promise. Those men looking for me in the town—I not dare show myself there—nor here till after dark. I all run away and get to Plymouth same night, and find ship before they find me."

David wished him good luck, and they parted. The hapless sailor was much more likely to come to grief, in his opinion, and he had a fellow-feeling for unfortunates at odds with the established order of things. He turned in the direction of Orestone; Ned, taking the opposite, along Roden Down, towards the Windstone Pits.

But David, hopelessly demoralized to-night, had no sooner descended from the headland into the Glen than, instead of pursuing his homeward way, he retraced the distance gone by a narrow, almost imperceptible track, strag-

gling along, and lying about half-way down the overhanging cliffs. Only his perfect familiarity with the ground here enabled him to tread it in the dusk without danger of a nasty fall.

The track presently ended altogether, at a point just opposite the grand jut of rock known as Molt Head. He would linger on here till ten o'clock—so as not to reach home until they were shutting up, and he need see nobody, nor show his face that night.

Dark, but never quite dark; the dim and jagged outlines of the giant black rocks were visible.

The sea was torn and ragged, making strange noises as it gurgled and welled up in the hollows underneath, where it had eaten into the cliff. Was that a whistle above—the coast-guard to his dog? The wind that haunts these points left nothing still.

A despair of life, of himself, fell upon David; a sense of horror, of desolation, filling his mind like a black vapor. It had nothing to do with the wild scene and wild weather—he was seasoned to these and to solitude—at times he loved them, they made him glad; and the unfriendly elements, the wind gone wild, the driving rain and devouring billows seemed the only right playfellows. But his long fast and

vigil, and the strain of overwalking, had helped to turn him for the hour to a morbid visionary, like some ascetic friar of old. In the lurid gloom, the night side of nature, of human nature, of his own, were turned to him; misery weighed down his heart like lead; hope was banned; and a thought without a name intruded. Afraid? Of his own distorted perceptions? of his shadow? his next impulse? his next act?

A crack—as it were of a mundane pistol—sounded distant and above; he could not be sure; the wind sang so shrilly in his ears. The sound seemed to come from far behind the lips of the overhanging cliff—some night poacher inland among the turnips.

It had broken his unwholesome reverie; he pulled himself together—he had been crooning here too long. He groped his way along the slippery, precipitous face of the cliff back to the Glen. A figure descending from the coastguard path above encountered his at the crossing of the stream that trickled through the defile. Elliston, going home, like himself. There was just light enough for the two to see each other. David named himself. Elliston stood still and silent for a minute.

“Did you hear a shot?” asked David.

“Hear it? Look there!” Elliston showed

his left hand, covered with blood. "Received it, too. That rascal Ned running from the magistrates, and having appropriated my pistol—taking me in the dusk for the coastguard, I fancy, let it off, not intending mischief I do believe; he fired in a fright, and then, when he saw what he had done, was so scared that he threw away the pistol and took to his heels as if the devil was at them. Lucky for him I couldn't give chase in the dark!"

He stooped down as he spoke, to wash some of the blood from his wrist in the stream.

"Are you much hurt?" asked David.

"It's not serious, but I think it's squared our account," he said.

He had bound up his hand with his handkerchief, David assisting him to fasten the ligature.

"You are out late, young man," remarked Elliston, regarding him inquiringly.

The young man returned the compliment.

"I've been for a day's fishing along the coast," Elliston explained. "It was slow work getting home after the wind shifted, and I sent back the smack, and got on shore at Heather Mill cove."

Their ways, as far as the South Scar, lay together; but David, whose mood was decidedly perverse to-night, invented some excuse for

taking the longer way to Lannacombe, striking inland up the Glen, to join the turnpike road, whilst Elliston followed the coastguard track, through Dodbrook Walk, to the South Scar and the Mount.

CHAPTER XIV.

FOR BETTER, FOR WORSE.

ELLISTON, on re-entering the Mount, went straight into the dining-room, and walked to the sideboard. The cellaret was locked. With a violent movement of impatience he strode to the door of communication with the drawing-room, and opened it. Within, a dim light burned, and all was still. Then some white thing, sunk in a chair, fluttered slightly with, he fancied, a tremulous shrinking from his approach, calculated desperately to annoy.

"Why are you sitting there in the dark, like crazy Jane?" he said, with irrepressible irritation. "And you've been hiding those keys again. Do give them up to me now—once for all."

Amy handed him a ring of keys from her pocket. The next moment she perceived that in the dusk she had mistaken the bunch, and she followed him quickly into the dining-

room, where he was stooping to unlock the wine-cupboard.

"Here is the key that you want," she said, putting it into his hand.

Elliston took out the spirit decanter and drank off a stiff glass of its contents. It was unlike his usual habit; and he saw Amy regarding him with mute surprise.

"I've had a cold walk," he said, constrainedly; but she continued to look—something new, something furtively fearful in her glance and manner to-night exasperated him to a high degree. "Oh, what the devil are you staring at, as if you had never seen me before?" he exclaimed, in desperation.

"Your hand," said Amy, simply, pointing to the blood-stained bandage on his wrist. "Have you hurt it?"

Elliston replied more pacifically.

"That infernal rascal, Ned, again! I ran across him, sneaking off to Plymouth in the dark, and hailed him, of course with no idea of hindering his escape—quite the contrary. The fool took fright, and fired his pistol at random—mine, rather, that he stole—and ran away. The ball glanced off. It's only a flesh wound. It bled a good deal, but the hurt's of no consequence."

Amy went back into the sitting-room and lit the candles, he following. There they sat awhile near each other in a silence Amy felt curiously oppressive; but the longer it lasted, the worse it was to break. A sort of nervous affection was taking hold of her, and she could have screamed out—it would have been a relief—but was restrained by a prevision of her consort's natural stupefaction. At last he spoke, partly breaking the spell:

"Amy," he said, abruptly, "this snail's life with a house on my back suits me badly; nor you much better, I should say, to judge from your looks to night. How soon could we start for a little run in French waters, in the '*Sprite*, just for a holiday change?"

"When you like," she answered, somewhat mechanically.

"To-morrow?" he suggested, inquiringly.

"To-morrow is rather soon," faltered Amy.

"Never soon enough to slip the collar, and take a few days' freedom on the ocean," he returned, heartily. "However, I'm not particular to a day or two. But if I'm to settle down here to the life of a clod, turn churchwarden, town councillor, and magistrate, I must take time to get acclimatized, and stipulate for a change from it now and then—at first, anyway. Now,

what do you say? Shall we go? Will you come?"

He spoke oddly, tentatively, distantly almost.

"Yes, I will come," she answered, and her ready response allayed the ill-temper she had provoked by her queer manner just now.

"That's right," he said, approvingly. "You'll be quite well when you get on board. The sea always suits you. Now, upstairs with you, and get to sleep as soon as you can. I've papers to look over, and no time to lose if we're to leave the Mount to take care of itself for a while. Don't you sit up for me."

Amy retired. But it was early still, and never had she felt sleep so far off, so inconceivable. Instead of preparing to rest, she sat up in her room, heedless of Elliston's injunctions, of his certain vexation if he came and found her waiting.

He had remarked just now on her altered appearance, but, busy and positive, much as he might have remarked on a rent in her gown, without assigning to it any more mental import. Poor Amy!

There had been a heavy strain on her thought since yesterday—confronted with an insolvable problem—the disclosure to her of the actual past of the man she loved; so grievously dif-

ferent from the fancy picture her tenderness had conceived from his confessions. Knowledge which, possessed in time, might have slain her girlish predilection; but that had now to cope with a woman's love, wooed, won, kindled to a passionate fondness, making self-devotion easy; an abiding link, an imperishable heart-dependence on him, something the thought of his possible complete unworthiness could not annihilate.

But this strange torment, coming upon her in disturbed health, had quickened her nerves to a pitch of abnormal susceptibility, whilst obscuring her reason and judgment. She was in a state when intuitions, emotions, fancies, presages of the most trivial import seem absolute, and persons reckoned sane commit acts the most irrational and puerile.

She sat with her face buried in her hands. Eleven had struck, but she felt sure her husband was not coming just now.

She had passed the day alone with her trouble, trouble she could confide to none. In her present half-hysterical condition, the mind, whether raised above or sunk below the common-sense level, sets its axioms at defiance. She had been schooling herself all day to digest the unpalatable, to reconcile the irreconcilable; the

leanings of her heart and her conscience; she thought she had brought them into some sort of harmony ; then Elliston's entrance just now had acted on her unexpectedly. The extraordinary shrinking she had felt from his presence—well, she knew yesterday already what might have justified it, why had it waited till to-night to be born? Her reason had not quite deserted her; it warned her that her increasing mental excitability would show itself in senseless, extravagant speech and behavior that might drive a more patient man than George out of himself by their absurdity. That she should ignore that physical ailment was the key to her mental disorder, was part of the disorder itself. He knew no better—how like a woman's subterfuge it looked—her licence to be cross, insufferable, unreasonable, aggravating to a Job of a husband, and then thrust the brute's part upon him by proclaiming herself ill!

A crazy, tiresome woman she would appear to him, whose humor to-night was clearly none of the best. How should she confront him, bear being laughed at, rated, though good-humoredly, and overborne—incapable as she felt of concealing or explaining her wretched mood?

A sudden noise made her start to her feet.

It was only a book or some such object let fall in the room below ; all was silent again immediately. But the clock showed her it was close upon midnight ; he would be coming directly ; and her vagaries culminated in a ridiculous seeming panic—anything but ridiculous to the subject of it at the moment. Sooner than face him whom she loved yesterday, and might love again to-morrow, she felt she could throw herself from the Scar under the garden into the sea !

She opened the door, slipped downstairs like a moonbeam : the garden door was unlocked—she was out in the dark, sped over the turf to the gravel drive, away down to the shuttered lodge, and out at the gates into the road bordering the North Scar. The tide was high, and the unquiet sea threw up splashes of yellow foam that wetted her hair.

Her flight hither had been the work of a few instants—she had been shot along by an irresistible impulse. Now her strange predicament completed her mental aberration, and a vague dread of check or pursuit drove her fleeing on, as if for life.

The strip of road between the Mount and Orestone, quiet at noonday, at midnight seemed dead as the life-forbidding regions of the moon.

Soon she reached the walls of the outlying villa gardens: she knew each as she sped past between them, from the scent of clematis here, of jessamine there—and here, here at last, were the gates of Sunnyside. They yielded to her hand; she darted up the drive to the house-door, and there stood leaning against it, breathless, and her heart beating with a violence that almost took away her senses. She felt like a criminal taking sanctuary; and yet, a sense of the humorous inconsequence of the comparison glimmered at that very moment. Then she knocked gently.

Mrs. Beverley was no early bird; her servants had long gone to bed, but she was still downstairs, quietly reading, when startled by this nocturnal summons. She hastened to unbar the door, and opened it to her midnight visitor.

And Amy, light, lifeless, like a leaf fluttering from the bough, fell into her arms.

About mid-day on the morrow, David was returning with a troubled, dubious face from a rough and perilous clamber among the Windstone Pits, when just at the North Scar he encountered Lalla and Barbara, gossip-intoxicated, two joyous, malicious, present-day nymphs, as they innocently poured the poison into his ears.

"David—have you heard, David, of the domestic tragedy at the Mount? Amy had a fearful quarrel with her husband—ran away from home in the dead of night, and is lying very ill at her mother's house!"

He stood planet-struck one moment; and the next was hurrying on, whilst eager cries were flung after him:

"David, David, if you are going into Orestone, you are to call at the post-office for Eveleen's parcel—do you hear? It was too large for us to carry. David, you wretched boy, are you deaf?"

"Yes—no—I'll be sure to," he shouted back, to get rid of them, hearing their footsteps in hot pursuit, as he went ahead, sworn to defy diffidence and discretion, and hie straight to Sunnyside to know the truth.

As for those gentle scandal-mongers, Lalla and Barbara, it was David's belief they would find ample consolation for the sudden and violent death of the friend of their bosoms in being the first to spread the news.

To his surprise, he was readily admitted at Mrs. Beverley's door, and, more unexpected still, Amy's mother received him with a serene countenance and manner, and anticipated the inquiries he hesitated to formulate.

"I am so glad you have come," she said. "I see from your face you have heard something, and you will oblige me by contradicting any absurd reports that may be flying about."

David, rigidly silent, waited for her to explain.

"I am very grieved about it," she said; "and yet the whole thing is almost laughable, if you see it in its proper light. Amy, poor child, has been behaving like a little goose; but she is not well; and has got into a queer, hysterical state. Then when fancifulness and unreason are the chief symptoms of your illness, not enough allowance is made for the physical disorder she herself does not recognize, and misunderstandings easily come about. I have seen him; and, like her, he emphatically denies that they have had the slightest quarrel. The fault, so far as I see, is entirely on Amy's side; but even now I do not consider her quite responsible for her behavior, and she certainly did not know what she was doing when she ran off to me last night. She had worked herself up into a kind of nervous fever."

"And he?" asked David.

"Had no suspicion till this morning of what had occurred. He had come in very tired after a long day's fishing, and sat up writing business letters, but dropped off to sleep in the dining-

room, and never woke till, at seven in the morning, the servants came in and told him that Mrs. Elliston was nowhere to be found. He came off to me at once in a terrible state of mind, and was unconscionably relieved to hear she was with me, and safe."

"How is she now?"

"Rather worse than better. She begs not to see him, and cannot be reasoned with. I have had a long consultation with him this afternoon, and I think he understands better. If only he will leave her to me I will set everything right in a very few days—after all, I have known her the longest. Illness makes her perverse, and I want to enlist the perversity on his side. Just because of some sharp word (I can think of no other reason), that he probably repented the next moment, she shuts herself up from him and shrinks from him. Well, let him humor her : go for a three days' run in the yacht, leaving her with me. There is nothing in her condition to cause him the faintest anxiety. But these hysterical attacks—she had one once before, when she firmly believed she had a lump in her throat and couldn't swallow—a perfectly imaginary state of things, as it turned out—baffle tact and medicine to deal with; and he might blunder regrettably without being to blame. We

women hanker directly after what is out of reach. Amy will be perfectly rational after a day or two of enforced rest and dullness, and long for his return, ashamed of what, poor child, was a weakness that he will not judge harshly on reflection, and both will smile by-and-by at what, after all, was only a lovers' quarrel."

"Has Elliston come round to your opinion?"

"He is very loath to leave her, even for a day: but I make his keeping away the condition of the speedy cure I promise. He entreats just to see her, and I feel a dragon of a mother-in-law for objecting; yet I know I am right. The best thing for her is to treat the whole matter for the moment as even more unimportant than it is. If she is piqued at his going away, it will do no harm. I think she has more rational moments, when she wonders a little at herself and her wilful behavior; but she is quite a nervous invalid still, and an exciting interview would hopelessly upset her again, so I shall put my veto on it if I can. At four to-morrow I am going to the Mount to have a long talk with him before he starts in the early morning."

"So Elliston goes, and Amy stays with you?"

"Yes. But why this tragic tone, David?"

His manner, up to this point even more subdued and undemonstrative than usual, had led

her on to talk with less than her usual reserve. Perplexed, she looked up at him. David had risen to his feet, saying, violently :

“ Then may the devil take and keep his own, and stop him from troubling us again ! ”

David hardly recognized his own voice, become savagely defiant for that one moment.

Poor Mrs. Beverley's face showed that she thought insanity was spreading among the circle of her intimates. Naturally, she felt very angry with this foolish youth, and that she did well to be angry, and to show it.

“ David ”—she rose also, speaking with cordial vexation and severe reproof—“ you forget yourself. You have shocked and pained me very deeply. How you have deceived me, too ! I had a better opinion of you, as I have shown ; and you have taken an unworthy advantage of my confidence. Can you suppose I should have talked to you so freely had I suspected that your mind was so envenomed with jealousy, and that you were abandoning yourself to its bad and treacherous influences ?—impulses perhaps accountable in your case, but none the less wrong. You whom I trusted like a son ! ”

David, standing there dumb now and down-cast, felt he had his *conge*, but he had often looked more ashamed for treading on her

gown, or spilling the tea, than for this last irretrievable error.

"Pray, forgive me," he stammered, confused, not repentant. "I—I would do nobody an injustice. As you said, I—forgot myself."

"Just so," she answered, gently, but with marked estrangement; "and until you can convince me that your judgment is no longer distorted by sentiments which you wrongly led me to believe played no part in your mind, it would be better, David, to keep away from me and mine."

He made no attempt at denial; and she bade him a mute and cold farewell. For, however abashed and contrite he might be, it would be treating his outburst too lightly to pardon it then and there.

Was he humbled? was he penitent? He was not sure. Like Amy, he was astray in a world of fantastic-seeming impressions, so strong as to drive him to act upon them at the very moment when cold reason scouted them as delusive.

The spark of suspicion, struck, perhaps, longer ago than he was aware of, and smouldering since, had been kindled to a steady blaze. He would watch Elliston, whose conduct at this crisis must either throw cold water or fuel on the flame.

CHAPTER XV.

A BOLD STROKE, AND A BOLDER.

THE following afternoon Mrs. Beverley went off to her appointment with her son-in-law at the Mount, leaving the strictest orders that no visitors should be admitted during her absence. It was the first time she had left the house and her daughter since the latter's mysterious midnight apparition.

Amy seemed better this afternoon, and had managed to drag herself downstairs, where her mother left her comfortably established on the drawing-room sofa. She was feeling stupid and queer, the effect of a sleeping draught given her last night—too stupid to think, thankful to be spared the least immediate responsibility.

So she lay in a dreamy stupor, not suffering from any positive discomfort, except this overwhelming prostration, making the most trifling exertion of mind or body a formidable effort,—and with something of the invalid or convales-

cent's deadness to all but materially present things, and increased sensibility to these: the golden rays of fast-fading sunshine falling aslant the carpet; the robin's song in the ilex trees near the window; the fragrance of a verberna plant filling the room.

Rest and quiet had already brought her nerves into better order; but her delicate and easily-depressed organism did not rally all at once—as susceptible as an infant's at this stage, and with scarcely more strength. She dozed off for ten minutes, then opened her eyes, still but half awake, and dreaming on, lulled by the twilight that had fallen and the stillness of the house.

A dream-feeling as of the old time (it was only four months dead)—the days of her art-frenzy, her student's phase of ardent enthusiasm, the sketching expeditions with David up the creeks, along the cliffs, art-walks, art-talks—and it was like going back to the doll's tea-parties, the sand-castles, the Christmas-trees, and ghost stories of early childhood—both alike seemed immeasurably distant and eternally closed. So the impressions of the near and the distant past floated confusedly upwards; herself, yet not herself—so utterly remote from the Amy of the moment.

From this idle, soothing trance she was startled by the crash of glass, broken and falling on the floor of the room where she lay. With a nervous start she sat up.

A sharp blow struck by a hand outside had shattered the window pane; the same hand, thrust through the opening, unfastened the casement, flung it open, and a figure—her husband's—stepped in. It all happened in a breath. The next instant he was beside her, speaking emphatically and low.

“Forgive me, Amy, for frightening you; I could not help it.” He was gently forcing her to lie down again whilst he spoke on: “As I walked up from the gate I saw you in here, with only the window between, and—well, the temptation took me to force my way in straight, since force it I must, and save the preliminary skirmish with your mother’s servant girl, who yesterday refused me admittance point-blank—not very pleasant, you must own.”

He had seated himself beside her, taking her hand in his: fixing his eyes on her face in uneasy inquiry, he continued firmly and composedly:

“She, your mother, insisted that I should go away without seeing you; she talked and talked till I gave in. But I found I could not make up my mind to that, Amy—not at least to leaving

you without hearing from your own mouth what your wishes were."

Amy's bewildered countenance was a sheer blank. She felt so dull-witted and helpless, the fumes of last night's narcotic still slightly affecting her head, dazed afresh by the surprise of his impetuous but kindly manner. Then came a rush of infinite relief; in his tone there was not a touch of the just annoyance and displeasure her extraordinary proceeding—sure to bring scandal and ridicule on them both—was calculated to raise.

Her offence had had no provocation, and his forbearance and placability, where she deserved only reproaches, were heaping coals of fire on her head. But the first moment she could only wonder and be glad. A latent sense of his natural and furious vexation had oppressed her more than she was aware of.

He drew nearer to her side. Lying there, flushed by emotion, her pretty hair in a silken tangle, her parted lips trembling faintly to an imploring smile, she was a very sweet little morsel of humanity indeed, and might have softened the ire of a Bluebeard. Elliston, extremely susceptible to beauty's influence, had a movement of fondness towards his wife. His look was anything but that of the pained,

aggrieved husband; and there was no feigning in the lover's gallantry of his tone as he murmured:

"Darling, why did you run from me that accursed night?"

A crimson blush overspread Amy's face; she would have buried it in her hands, but he held them both. She struggled faintly, but he had her at his mercy; she could not hide her shame. She answered with a painful effort:

"George, I cannot tell you; it would sound too foolish. I was mad, I think. Something drove me. I was so afraid."

His brows contracted; he let her go, pushed back his chair abruptly; his voice was cold—harsh, almost—as he said sharply, still scanning her countenance:

"Afraid of what?"

Amy kept him waiting a few moments for her answer, and he caught a little, not untender, fluttering smile on her lips ere they whispered, inaudibly:

"Of making a fool of myself in your sight, George."

His features suddenly relaxed; he was bending down, with his arm clasping her waist, and he kissed her hard and repeatedly.

But Amy gave him a despairing, reproachful glance; she withdrew her hand, and turned her

face from him, pressing it against the cushions, a tremor of agitation shook her whole frame with an agony of mental conflict. It said, "Remember."

He allowed her to free herself, rose, and walked disturbedly up and down the room, controlling as well as he could the impatience reflected on his troubled countenance; then coming to a standstill by the sofa, where she lay with face still averted :

"Amy," he said, plainly, "it is necessary I should know how I stand with you." He paused; she neither stirred nor spoke. He continued, with some vehemence:

"If you hate me, tell me so. Don't be afraid. I shan't thrust myself upon you, but if you are to be taken from me, I must know first from your own lips that such is your desire."

"I, to be taken from you?" echoed Amy, wearily and amazedly.

"Aye," he ground his teeth, and stamped almost fiercely. "Your mother—she means well, I don't doubt—is plotting to get me out of the way—to send me to sea—anywhere, no matter, so I go. I think if I levanted altogether she would not be sorry : she has never forgiven me for taking her only daughter. Are you a party to this, Amy? Do you want to shake me off—

let me go my own way, and become of me what may, what must—without you?”

“I never thought of such a thing—never dreamt you were going at all,” said Amy, truthfully.

Elliston's face cleared. “Just as I thought,” he said. “They have been deceiving you, treating you like a child or an invalid. Listen: your mother has settled it. I am to go cruising to-morrow for as long as suits her good pleasure, to Southampton, to Guernsey,—to hell. I am to leave my wife behind—those are my orders.”

Amy drew a long breath, and pressed her hand to her forehead, trying to think. He resumed significantly:

“The other night when I asked you, you said you would not hang back, you would go. I won't bind you to your promise, perhaps I don't deserve your company. But you knew that when you made the promise.”

Amy could not contradict him. Her wandering eyes seemed seeking, craving for help and direction, and only met his unshrinking, authoritative, soliciting gaze. There came a burst of impotent passion.

“'S life! I was a fool to believe you when you said you could love the man I was. Did I

pretend to you I had a white record? You heard my story, Amy, yet left your hand in mine. Only, I forgot I was talking to a puritanical, prim-spirited schoolgirl. Women in England live and die in the nursery in their ideas; your mother is there still. When I spoke of my black list, it passed with you for a few ungodly oaths rapped out, or dice on Sunday's or a night's debauch, or rough handling of a nigger. What do you know of a fighting man's life, and what it means, with its chances and temptations?"

He broke off. Amy was thinking that she knew something now.

"You can't bear even to hear them related, poor unfledged birds that you are! Once face the truth about your lover, your husband, you cry and run, your schoolgirl love and baby-spirit crushed like a grasshopper."

He turned on his heel with impatience and derision. But Amy started to her feet with a cry of pain. "George, you don't, you never, will understand. Cannot you see that I love you, and that I am wretched, because everything else in me, everything I ever felt before and believed true and right, tells me I ought not? Yet I cannot go back on what I have felt for you. I did love you, George, though I knew

a little of how you had lived, and I do still now though I know the worst; it cannot be wrong. Oh, am I not your wife?"

Elliston had caught her in his embrace, and to her excited speech he returned fire, audaciously and confidently, with the acute zest of the hunter at the deciding moment of the chase:

"Never, Amy. Love laughs at everything that is not itself: that's the same all the world over. Out here your pirates and sharks call themselves commercial geniuses, or smart lawyers, that's all the difference. There were wreckers among your fine folks in Orestone not so long ago. Nobody is so honest as you think, and those who stake their lives in the game are to my mind the more respectable of the two. But there, what's all this parson's talk for? we needn't do their work for them. And you've said it—you are my wife. For better or worse you have taken me, my beauty, and I shall keep you now. You had my confession already, and now, Amy, I have yours."

"George!" She abandoned herself; he held her eagerly, as if he was carrying, hurrying her away from some perilous spot.

"Come," he said.

"Where—to the Mount?" said Amy, with an instant, palpable shrinking.

Nervously weakened still, she was haunted by a sombre retrospective impression of that fateful evening, and of her insensate-seeming fit, as though the sinister force of association might bring it back again.

"No, no; to the *Watersprite* now," he returned, promptly. "She lies close in the harbor—the boat is waiting at the jetty to take us across. Come just as you are, Amy; in five minutes we shall be on board."

He was wrapping her up carefully in the large fur cloak that hung over the sofa; muffled her head in the hood.

"It is getting dusk, you will not be noticed and stared at. I will come back at once to fetch your mother to see you there, and tomorrow we shall sail, you and I together, after all."

His insistence, his impatience, whirled her along to yield unresistingly; she had nothing to do, nothing to oppose; the physical spell of his presence was powerful, and there was no motive for resistance to his will. There was still to her something of the unreality of a dream about what was passing. She suffered him to act—this kidnapping of his own wife was an adventure after his own heart; he even chuckled at the fact of they two flying secretly

from the house like guilty lovers. His arm supported, swept her out of doors, down the garden walk to the gates, like a child. His whisper fell on her ear as he opened them :

“ So I have had to woo and win you twice over, my pretty runaway. You will stay with me now.”

A single figure that was loitering near the gates of Sunnyside, and vanished into the shadow of the angle of the wall as Elliston opened them, saw him come out with his charge. It followed them at some distance, cautiously, as they turned down the road, here become the High Street, whence a slit of a lane, a few steps onward, led immediately to the tiny landing-stage. They went down the steps, and presently a little boat struck off, rowing swiftly towards where the masts of the *Watersprite* were visible by the lights in the harbor.

It was David's figure waiting there, unseen by husband and wife. He watched the boat push off, then turned up the street and seemed to stagger blindly for a few steps. Not that the escapade he had just witnessed had exactly taken him by surprise.

He was the prey of a monstrous suspicion, too unwarranted by a shred of evidence for him to dare breathe it to a living soul. But it caught

him in a vice ; and this last move of Elliston's tightened the hold over him of his atrocious fancy, his nameless presage.

"Amy setting sail with that blackguard? He will not let her go, for she knows too much, I suspect. Not all though——" Here was a precipice ; he recoiled from it, and tried to think in a matter-of-fact way.

"She loved him and married him, knowing something, perhaps, of what he was. Does he love her?"

"To-day, perhaps ; but to-morrow? No telling. With such an unequal mate she is bound for misery ; which is no affair of yours, David Ferrier. But if for danger, right or wrong, my affair it shall be."

The force of events was driving David, as occasionally happens, to act for once violently out of character. His was diffident to excess, consequently inert and unready—all the enterprise in him damped by over-caution and depression ; yet the extravagant project forming in his mind, and now flatly determined on, was that of an adventurer. It was no proof that he was growing courageous—a man's nature altereth not—rather such a single rash step as may drain the boldness out of such a youth for the rest of his life. But once overstep the bounds

of your nature, and you may go further in a certain direction than those who have not had to violate their instincts at the start, as unhampered now by your real self as a good man by his goodness when enacting a villain's part on the stage.

David walked on down the narrow High Street, and entered the tavern of the Turk's Head, where at the bar he met the unexpected figure of Elliston's ship's cook, by name John Sims, one of a fresh lot recently imported by the former for his coming trip. David had treated this man before, and now treated him again, receiving in return the bits of information he sought about the *Watersprite*, the crew, and their orders. Doomed by his temperament to be a mere looker-on at life for the most part, he had become, in return, a tolerable judge of character, and had gauged that of Sims, not inaccurately, as one well adapted to his purpose; easy-going and shrewd, greedy of gain, and as unfettered by scruples as David generally was overweighted by their inconvenience. He was a stranger alike to Orestone and to Elliston, who had picked him up at Plymouth.

David got him alone in the parlor, and pretended to listen to his yarns,—poured out over a goodly supply of pipes and ale,—preparing

his speech. His new-born boldness knew no shuffling or vacillation, but he waited till his boon companion had reached the proper point of grateful familiarity before launching his proposal.

"Look here, Sims," he said abruptly, but with broad significance, "have you a mind to earn three hundred pounds?"

The man stared at him, winked, laughed, and drained his glass. "Bless my soul! that's about what I want to set me up in a little grog shop over at Plymouth that I know of, where I'd turn over thousands in a year——" Then glancing interrogatively at David, "But what's the joke, sir? for, as sure as my name's John Sims, I don't see it."

"It's no joke," said David; "only I've a mind to take this cruise with you in the *Water-sprite*"—he hesitated, then added, in a matter-of-fact way, as if it were a most ordinary proposal he was making—"but in the character of one of the hands, not my own. *The skipper's not to know.* I'll undertake to dish myself up so that he won't recognize me in a hurry. He needn't see me close, the ship's big enough. You can keep me out of his way if you choose; and I'll pay you well for it, as I said."

Taking out his pocket-book he produced the

money—his capital just realized, as we know, to carry out his London projects.

The man glanced deeply at the bank-notes, then squinted up at David, slyly and suspiciously.

“Aye; but I’d like to know—what may be your game, to do such a thing?”

“Well, it’s a fancy of mine,” said David, “and if you see how any mischief can come of it to a living soul, you’re sharper than I am, that’s all. A young man’s freak. Now, what do you say?” and he slowly restored the notes to his pocket-book. “A hundred if you smuggle me on board as your mate. Another hundred if we reach the farthest point of the cruise without your letting the cat out of the bag—the sailors don’t know me, remember; there’s no difficulty except with Elliston and his wife—and the third when we get home.”

The man thought and thought. Of a sudden his eye twinkled wickedly. “Ah, well,” he said, “Mrs. Elliston’s a rare pretty lass, they say.”

David controlled his sensations. “Mrs. Elliston,” he replied, dryly, “is the last person I want to have the faintest suspicion of the thing; if the least hint reaches her our bargain is up on the spot. You told me yesterday you

were commissioned to find an extra hand, but the wages were too low. Say I'm from the country, and want to get to wherever you're going, and will give my services for a free passage—it's true as gospel. Once there, you can say I like the life, and will take the voyage back again."

"Well," said the man, with an indescribable rascally good-nature, "it's not for the likes of me to cross-question or judge a young gentleman like you. Even if the skipper finds you out, I don't suppose there'll be murder. Only you'll not contradict me then if I swear I took you for the workhouse lad or whatever we give you out to be."

"Certainly not."

Sims nodded. "Then I'm your man for the lark," said he, familiarly.

"You shall have your first payment to-night," said David. "When and where shall I meet you?"

"The skipper dines on board at seven. We'll run it as late as we can—to make all safe at the start, anyway. I'll slip ashore at ten. You come to me at the landing-steps; it's black as ink, just a twinkling light or two. I'll whistle—so. You answer the signal if you're there."

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The Ferrier family, David excepted, were dining out that night: the servants had profited thereby to hold a jollification in the kitchen; David walked indoors unheard, and locked himself into his room.

Later, when the backstairs orgie was at its loudest, the front door opened and shut again, and a stranger figure stepped out and was quickly swallowed up in the darkness of the serpentine, lonely lanes.

The Ferriers, one Christmas, had got up some theatricals. David, forced into the service for an ungrateful part no one else would hear of taking, had distinguished himself somewhat by that complete external metamorphosis to which natural insignificance of person lends itself best. "Well," his father was heard saying, in the front row, 'I shall know Dave, anyway, directly he comes on," David at that very moment being there before him, in the guise of a servant apprentice, dusting a table with his elbow.

"Split me!" exclaimed the inquisitive and expectant Sims, when, on the second signal only, he ventured to respond to David's whistle, and accost his quondam acquaintance. "I was looking out for a surprise, but hadn't thought

you could diddle me like that. The skipper'll have to be Old Nick himself if he spots you."

"Mrs. Elliston's on board," said the man, as they rowed across.

"Is she?" said David, indifferently; but he listened as his friend related how Elliston had brought Mrs. Beverley over to the *Watersprite*, and all three had dined together on board, and parted seemingly in peace and harmony. Mrs. Beverley evidently had had to forgive her son-in-law his *ruse* and infraction of her premises while leaving her to wait and wait for him at the Mount, as successful insurgents are bound to be forgiven. By thus taking the law into his own hands, he had forced on the reconciliation she had thought to bring about in a longer way. Explanations delayed, leaving Amy to brood, might have widened the breach; the present consummation would save the unlucky fact of her flight from exaggeration in her mind or his, as well as in the common talk.

Elliston just now was on shore, reconducting Mrs. Beverley to Sunnyside gallantly. Had she even wished to detain Amy, how could she do so, husband and wife having otherwise agreed?

"Well," said Mr. Sims' face distinctly, as he and his companion boarded the *Watersprite*, and

the flashing lights showed him David's disfigurement: his darkened, blurred skin; coarse, matted head of hair; discolored hands, and rough, ill-fitting clothing; ragged, incipient beard; and eyelids shrunken and red, "if the young fool is sweet on Mrs. Elliston, it may yet be true what he says: that he wouldn't have her know him in these duds for a kingdom."

"Are we ourselves or our clothes?" David was thinking, oddly, as he tumbled into his berth, next to that of his confederate.

He thought of them at Lannacombe, reading the letter he had left on the hall table, stating merely that he was leaving them rather sooner than he expected, and that they would hear from him later on. He had previously spoken of his London plan; and they would have nothing to wonder at but his precipitate action—his abrupt departure, and shrug their shoulders once more at his hopelessly erratic mode of conducting (or misconducting) himself.

But what would they have thought of him had they known the fact that David, in disguise, was slipping on board Mr. Elliston's yacht, in the assumed character of one of the subordinates?

And his object? At first the mere vagary of a fertile imagination, it had lain hid in his head,

and sprung forth despotic, a set purpose, the moment he saw Elliston taking his wife—for-given or forgiving, on whichever side pardon was due—over to his yacht.

“If she goes with him, so will I; that some one shall be near, in case——”

In case of what?

Some one to watch him; apprise her friends if her safety is endangered; shield her if call arises, at the cost of his life.

Should there be nothing to apprehend—should the worst be a hideous figment of his wretched, disordered lover’s brain,—well, the world will go on, and she need never know.

CHAPTER XVI.

EXCURSIONISTS.

THE *Watersprite* had been ten days on the wing, and now lay in harbor at Guernsey, having arrived there yesterday from Plymouth.

All but David and his friend, Mr. Sims, were on shore. Off duty, alone and unwatched in the forecabin, he took the rare opportunity for pondering the incidents of the cruise, up to the present moment.

Unless he chose to proclaim his identity, it would not, he now felt tolerably certain, be detected by those whose observation he feared, but had found little difficulty in avoiding. Elliston had not set eyes half-a-dozen times on the ill-conditioned extra lad Sims had picked up cheap at the last. Amy had barely crossed his sight at a distance. Disregarded thus, he felt unexpectedly secure in his incognito. His confederate's tongue was sealed with a sure—a golden seal. The cook had cunning for two, and made David's part an easy and passive one.

He passed him off for very much what he was—a country lad, sick of home, hankering after a change, quiet-witted, slow of speech, a ready-made tool for those over him to profit by—witness Mr. Sims, who thoroughly enjoyed making David do the best part of his work for him. For the sailors, “Jacob Green,” quickly converted by them into “Green Jacob,” was a heaven-sent butt, whom, luckily for the latter, they had little time to bully—a rustic booby, who cannot swim, or fight, or swear, or swill grog, and who makes wry faces when the boat rolls.

Thrice idiot that he was, our David, transcending Jack tar’s poor conceptions of the limits of human folly! What was Jacob Green, the pauper lad and supposed simpleton, to the real one, David Ferrier, who in his fit of temporary insanity, could throw away all his money without counting, for what? Leave to inflict on himself several weeks of bodily misery and rough drudgery, under a humiliating disguise.

Forty-eight hours of it helped him to view his proceeding in its normal light, with shame and mortifying self-distrust. In all common, human probability, Elliston was nothing worse than the rough diamond Amy took him to be, and David was a jealous hyena. Had he an

Iago inside him poisoning his understanding wherever Elliston was concerned? Reason, duty, and personal ease, a powerful factor, all said, "Confess to your mate that you're cured of your nonsense fit—and have had enough of masquerading on board as a Gibeonite. Square your account with him, go ashore at Plymouth, and let him find another drudge."

That was more than a week ago. That David was still at his post was due to a trifling chance incident.

The skipper had a sea-temper, worse than what he wore on shore, and was particularly out of humor that second day. Mr. Sims had gossiped to David about certain unpleasant pecuniary entanglements, evidence of which was said to have met his master at Dartmouth, and altered his plans. But he was not so absorbed in his money affairs but he could be violently put out by some dish the cook had not served to his liking, and came down to rate the offender who, having David at his mercy, did not hesitate to shift the blame to his underling's shoulders. As the latter stood hanging his head, and staring down, the image of a crestfallen, easily cowed bungler, he scarcely heard one of the choice epithets of abuse hurled at him by the captain. The bandage Elliston had hitherto worn round

his hand had slipped down, and David saw it bare to the wrist. No more trace of a scar anywhere than on his own. Even the slight injury Elliston had described himself as having received from Ned's pistol must have left a mark.

Then David knew he had lied to him that night. Knowing that, he had stayed on, forgetting his vacillations.

The day of their arrival at Plymouth, Amy was taken very ill. She would not have her mother written to and alarmed, and there seemed no call. The doctor promised her she would be well in a week, and proved quite right, Yesterday David had seen her on deck; and, though she struck him as strangely altered—the loss of her brightness of complexion and girlish buoyancy of expression, seeming to alter the features, whose fairness was obscured for the time—yet she looked stronger than when they left Orestone, and was evidently not out of health at present.

The maid they had taken with them from the Mount, who waited on her during her illness, David suspected of being a no-account, irresponsible creature, an easy slave to Elliston's fatal quality of authority. Amy believed her attached and devoted—"but," thought David, "I am much mistaken if her attention and ser-

vices are given from any motive but servile obedience to her master. As for her duty to her mistress, she would violate it at his bidding, without reluctance. Or do I wrong a respectable girl? My imagination is bedevilled." Was it the reaction from his sluggish, cloistered life at home that pitched him into this orgie of foul, perverted fancies?

Perversion or inspiration?—devilish or divine?—Which?

His lucubrations were cut short by an unexpected summons on deck. The skipper and his wife, who had been lunching with some Devonshire yachting acquaintances at the hotel, had returned, and were going for a sail outside the harbor in a small boat attached to the *Watersprite*. A hand was wanted to row, and—whether because the yachtsmen were busy or on shore, or for some other reason—"Green Jacob" was selected, and sent for.

He obeyed as mechanically as if he had been the mere pair of arms and legs they took him for, felt abashed rather than angry when Elliston swore at him for his awkwardness in getting into the boat—the master's fault, for shoving the lad forward rather roughly.

Amy had ceased, as it were, to notice her consort's violent language or humors; you

would say she had silently made up her mind to accept them as crosses from which no married life is free.

There was a fresh breeze ; and presently Elliston ran up the sail. In all things nautical David must admire his unerring skill. It was a pleasure to watch his dexterous management of their little craft, as it sported in the brisk wind, amid strong and conflicting currents. Dangerous sport, perhaps, with a less clever pilot. But even David saw no risk, and there was charm for Amy in the little feeling of venturous excitement.

Both husband and wife were very silent. Elliston's face David had never liked so little, though he could not penetrate below his air of moody abstraction.

Amy, too, sunk in thought, seemed to have something on her mind. Then she spoke abruptly, as if referring to some lately held conversation, probably with their acquaintances on shore.

"George, it does seem so very strange that nothing more should have been heard of poor Ned. It is a fortnight to-day since he disappeared."

"What of that ?" said Elliston with a shrug. "Vagabonds wanted by the police outwit them every day."

"Yes, but his color and speech would make it next to impossible for him to escape; and, besides, that poor fellow had not the gift of taking care of himself."

Elliston's countenance showed, to David, his plain objection to the subject, and a sort of rage with Amy for harping upon it. But either she was unobservant, or some fatal fascination forbade her to let go the theme.

"I shall write this very day and get my mother to have inquiries made. The coast ought to be searched between Roden Down, where you saw him last, and Plymouth. The poor fellow may be hiding—starving—I don't know—but I have a fear that something must have happened to him."

"Then there would be one drunken rogue the less," returned Elliston, shortly, and unanswerably.

For both lady and gentleman the presence of that low-class dunce at the further end of the boat counted probably as no more intelligent than that of the oars he clumsily held, but it is certain that no one but David could have caught Amy's low-whispered impulsive aside, of sad, remorseful entreaty:

"Ah, you will never forgive him for talking, yet you know, George, it was I, not he, who

was to blame for that. I made him tell me, and indeed, indeed, it is for the best."

A pause followed. Elliston seemed occupied with the sail. Then—all David knew of was a gust of wind, a flap and a jerk, it was the mischief of a moment—the next, he was struggling in the water close to the boat, which had been overturned—the sail collapsed. He hung on to the side, looking about, as he got his breath, for the others. Amy was in the water at some little distance, buoyed up for the moment by her cloak. Of Elliston he could see nothing.

David, to his shame be it spoken, was no swimmer. If he could reach Amy, which was improbable, it would only be to drown together; but without an instant's reflection he had let go of his plank of salvation and was making in her direction, with the wild, ill-directed strokes that had been the amusement of the sailors.

"Don't cling to me," he said, as he neared her, forgetting his part, but his choked voice only came as a hoarse whisper, and Amy, with the rush of water in her ears, did not hear it. But her presence of mind was wonderful. She did not clutch hold of the arm that had struggled to her aid, though she was almost sinking. David, throwing himself on his back,

managed to keep himself afloat with one hand and to hold her head above water with the other, both calling for help. Elliston, as well at home in the water as an otter, where was he? Something was vainly struggling in the waves near the boat.

"I shall never be able to hold her till help comes," poor David felt, tardily cursing his neglect of this athletic exercise. Then one of the sculls luckily drifted within his reach; it served as a life-buoy for a few minutes more.

Meanwhile their cries had attracted attention on shore; a boat was put off, arriving in the nick of time to their rescue, for Amy, with cold, fright, and exhaustion, was nearly unconscious. She was safely got in, then David, and lastly Elliston, who seemed in a worse plight than either, having become entangled in the cordage, drawn under the boat, and nearly suffocated before he could free himself. One, two and three, however, had escaped with a wetting.

Amy, characteristically, wanted to make light of the matter. It was natural that Elliston, annoyed at an accident due to his careless handling of the sails, should do likewise, make the fault Amy's for an alleged hasty movement, or David's for a crab he had *not* caught. Amy half hesitated to thank very warmly the sheepish lad

who had come to her assistance, lest it should irritate her lord by emphasizing the peril they had run and he wanted to deny. Directly she opened her lips Elliston caught her up, saying in his contemptuous, jesting way: "And as for you, Jacob, why, they told me you couldn't swim. It seems you can when a lady's in the case, or you're not born to be drowned, that's certain."

Perhaps David had caught cold from his ducking and was thrown into a fever. All night long he lay sleepless in his berth. Black apprehensions, sinister forebodings, or hellish delusions had him in thrall. And now first he realized his utter helplessness to avert, to checkmate the very worst, if it were pending. His adventure, something in him foresaw, was nearing its climax and its end.

Although the *Watersprite* was understood to be returning to Orestone very shortly, there was an impression on board, duly reported to David by his mate, that Elliston found himself disagreeably compromised in money transactions, and was trying to sell the yacht quietly, starting a surmise in the experienced mind of Sims, that at the very time when he was expected back at the Mount he was planning to give his creditors the slip and embark with his wife for some easier latitude.

Now, whilst the result of the cruise upon David had been to confirm his ugliest misgivings, and add nameless suspicions, it had afforded him no single weapon of proof, nor opened a door to action.

“Good; but if Amy is to be spirited away to another hemisphere out of all other friends’ sight or reach—in *his* sole keeping—well, let me see her first, find out from her what she knows, and if I can serve her in any way I have not thought of.”

That was the upshot of his midnight meditations. It was his last card, and a poor one, but he would play it.

His confederate, having just pocketed his second fee, was ready to do anything required of him—play spy, lie, steal, with cheerful alacrity. Fortunately, David had conscience for both, and merely troubled him to find out the skipper’s plans for the morrow.

Elliston had gone off to Jersey by steamer for the day, Sims suspected, to negotiate for the sale of the yacht. Mrs. Elliston had errands or visits to pay in the town which would take her on shore in the afternoon, and she would meet the return steamer at the pier at six. Sims had overheard them arranging it. David asked for a day’s holiday, which was granted, and went

ashore more than half-minded—whatever should come of the interview with Amy he was determined to secure—not to go back on board. He would send a word to his friend Sims; it was certain no one else would take the trouble to look for Green Jacob. He had taken his measures accordingly.

A mile from the harbor is a rocky cove, a resort of sea-bathers who wish to shirk the fee at the regular establishment. Hither David betook himself, but at an hour, when the tide was unfavorable for swimmers; he could not have chosen a more solitary retreat.

From the hollow rock which he entered with his bundle containing not towels but his garments of gentility, he presently emerged David Ferrier again, and so glad to be rid of a hateful disguise that he was on the point of tossing the bundle containing Jacob's attire into the sea. To speak out to Amy in his own person was his only resource—after which he should disappear.

Only his habitual self-distrust made him hesitate to commit himself thus irretrievably to a particular course. So he left his bundle concealed under a rock, above high-water mark, and went on his way back to Peter Port.

He stationed himself on the embankment and waited about till he saw the little boat put off

from the *Watersprite*, rowing Amy to shore. As she landed on the quay, the first person that met her eyes was David advancing from among the local loiterers.

Amazed, embarrassed, she stood, as if unable or unwilling to credit her senses.

"*David!*" She really did not seem quite sure of him, his darkened, worsened complexion, which he had been unable to restore to its original fairness, altered his aspect considerably; "is it—*can* it be you?"

"Yes, it is I, Amy," he said, taking the hand she held out half-hesitatingly, not very cordially, alas, it seemed to him.

"But what ever brings you here?" was her next question.

"I was just going to ask that of you, Amy. They said at Orestone the *Watersprite* was starting for Torbay first and then for the Picardy coast."

"We were delayed by my falling ill, and altered our plans."

"So you will put off going home to the Mount?"

"I do not exactly know what we shall do," she answered. "Our plans are quite unsettled."

"Well, Amy," David said, constrainedly but determinedly, "as I don't know—nor evidently

do you—whether, or even if, we may meet again——” he heard the desperation that penetrated his tone and stopped, knowing it would infallibly be misinterpreted.

“What do you want of me, David?” she asked, gently, but with a certain distance.

“Only to speak to you—not for long, nor for my own sake, believe it, Amy—I am thinking only of you and of him.”

Her look of uneasiness came directly—too well aware as she must be of trouble in the wind.

“Tell me what you mean,” she said, anxiously; “but you must make haste. I have some commissions to do for him in the town, and must be at the pier to meet the Jersey steamer when it arrives.”

Together they walked along the shore, a dull, quiet road. So much achieved, David found he had no plan of action, no purpose; could only go straight ahead.

“Is it true, Amy—what I have heard—that you and Elliston are going to leave the country?”

“You have no right to ask me such questions, David,” she answered, firmly, “and if it is for that you——”

“Just answer this one,” broke in David, with

vehement entreaty, "for the sake of your friendship—if ever you had any for me—which sometimes you make me doubt."

"I cannot," she replied, "unless you first give me your word, which I know to be as sure as the ground under my feet, that you are speaking as his friend as well as mine."

"I give you my word, Amy, that I have nothing at heart but your welfare. George Elliston is your husband, and since no ill can possibly befall him without striking you it is no enemy's part he has to fear from me."

Amy's composure, though evidently acquainted with her husband's troubles, was partly reassuring, lifted the load of the worst suspicion from David's mind. Surely his wife must know him best.

She appeared satisfied. "Then I will tell you," she said; "indeed, your knowing may be of service to us—that we cannot possibly return to the Mount at present. He has got into a terrible legal difficulty by having, I fear, acted rashly in trying to avoid a lesser pecuniary one. It is necessary that for some time he should keep out of England."

"And you with him?"

"Can you doubt it?"

This time her firm, tranquil tone, breathing

as it were the very depths of ignorance, of confidence based on incomplete understanding, wrung him with a new despair. He spoke wildly—it was no matter—what in reason could he say that she would listen to?

“Amy, I implore you not to leave this country—not to put yourself out of reach of your friends there, and their help and protection,” “you may need them both.”

“Where he goes so must I,” she said. Then, after a pause, “They can do nothing for me.”

Simple, self-possessed words, which had a terrible significance for David.

“You have not told me all,” he said. “But I know. Elliston—the man you married—you know what he is—his past history?”

“All—now,” said Amy, with a singular emphasis.

The surmise that had haunted him, grown to conviction, made doubly sure by a something, he knew not what, in her face—it was choking him, he must out with it:

“Ned told you, I know it; Ned of Samoa. Little he thought, when Masters took him out of jail and along with him to Orestone, that there of all places, he would find his old master—Alexander, the hero of the Pacific; better

known to him as Great Sandy—whom he alone perhaps knew to be alive.”

Amy gazed at him in deep consternation and utter bewilderment.

“For God’s sake, David, how did this come to *your* ears?” she asked, nervously. Then, be-
thinking her, “Ah, it was Ned talked to you
as he did to me. Then you must have seen
him? Tell me where he is.”

“Ask Elliston, for I swear to you I do not
know,” said David. “Hints dropped by that
poor fellow put me on the track, so long ago as
your wedding day, Amy,—and other things
since. Mr. Masters’ narrative was too curious
to be so soon forgotten. Of how Alexander
escaped, and who was the drowned man falsely
identified, I know nothing. Some white com-
rade of his, whose body Ned—so I suspect—
swore to as his master, Alexander’s, to give
him, if alive, the better chance to go free, as
indeed it came about?”

Amy clasped her hands disturbedly, much
distressed.

“Then his secret is known. But you, at
least, David,” she said, eagerly, “will not
betray him. And those stories Mr. Masters
told were mostly untrue. Still, he has been
deeply wrong; and if those who had to do

with him formerly should learn that he is still living, and where, they will hunt him down yet. Oh, what shall I do?" One moment she hid her face, overcome.

Hoarsely, impetuously, David spoke. "Amy, let him go his devil's way without you. Leave him; return to Sunnyside, to your home."

That was all. The rest—" *He wishes you dead; your life is not safe with him. Was it safe yesterday?* "—was unspoken; his lips simply refusing to utter what *might*, what must be a black and hideous calumny. But he felt as if the words must have cried aloud from his face, and looked for her start of horror. Recovering himself, he went on—

"He will never come there to claim you. Go back; say that you will, and I will be his best friend; bury all I know; do anything you bid me to help his evasion."

"I have your unconditional word, David," she reminded him. "You cannot break it or betray him,"

"I cannot. . . ." As his last hope for her fell dead, his violent antipathy towards Elliston broke out unchecked. Threateningly and thoughtlessly he added, "But tell him what I have told you: that his old history, his old name, are known to another besides Ned and

yourself; and tell him this, from me, that if any one knows where Ned is, it is George Elliston."

Amy regarded him, scared by his strange manner, but uncomprehending as a child.

"What do you mean?"

"Do not ask. But I want him to know that your indiscretion is not the main danger about which he need concern himself."

"I shall certainly warn him," said Amy, indignantly, "that in you, say what you please, he has a bitter enemy. David, you are not acting generously, nor even sincerely. Has it come to this, that I must call you false friend?"

"God in heaven! Amy," cried the poor lad, "what must I do to convince you that I would be cut to pieces without a word, if it could lighten your trouble?"

"No; or you would not add to it by seeking to injure him in fact, and in my opinion."

David was at his wits' end. Tossed about by conflicting, contradictory impressions and motives, he no longer cared what he said.

"And this man," he said, agitatedly—"Alexander, or Elliston, or,—you love him still. He deceived you cruelly from the beginning."

"He loved me," said Amy, simply.

"He abused your trust and ignorance, pass-

ing himself off as an honest man. He treats you lightly now, like the adventurer, the libertine that he is."

"He loved me," said Amy again, inaudibly.

"You think he loves you still?"

Her expression, pathetic in its fortitude, had a depth in it beyond David's fathoming.

"He is in dreadful trouble," she said. "At such times a man's mind is clouded, and he does not think of courting. That he is in fault makes the danger and the distress he has brought me into the more trying for us both. It is a terrible crisis for him; but he will love me again when this cloud is past—and better than before. We must wait. I am not a girl now, David; I can face the destiny I have chosen, though I chose blindly."

David groaned inwardly, mute despair in his eyes. Amy—born, fitted, predestined to adorn a pure hearth, to walk in honor and joy and uprightly in the light of day, mated with one of noble nature, like herself, and untarnished repute; he saw her bound in love and marriage to a man inwardly branded with crime, cynical and unrepentant, bold and desperate, going on her way with him to be dragged down into misery, duplicity, wearing anxiety, and the sor-

rows that kill by inches those not dead to shame.

Amy, quick as of old to follow his thoughts, was moved as of old to answer.

"I do not look for joy," she said: "it is a dream. Perhaps love—man's love—is little more, but not a woman's—not mine."

"You mean that yours is not touched by what you now know that he has done."

"Not that," she said. "But I had given it—my heart, and my life that goes with it. I cannot go back on myself; men do that, not we. I did not ask if he was worthy of it when I gave it; I took it for granted; and I cannot be so far deceived as you think. He will become so yet. There is a dark time before us just now, but I can make it lighter for him. We may have to live in exile, to hide even, to forsake all our friends—I am forsaking and deceiving my mother now—but I can do my part, which is to bear trials and privations, as other wives have done. I can work too. Oh, he will not find me the weak, useless, drawing-room ornament he perhaps fears to sometimes. He will redeem the past, care for me better than at first, if in a different way; and the time will come when we shall both hold up our heads without shame or shrinking. I can do something to bring that about."

"Never, Amy, it is too late"—David was not so cruel as to say it; and no words would come to him but such as stuck in his throat.

Amy, you little treasure of civilization, bred up in a superfine atmosphere of high thinking, your eyes, your judgment are sealed here by your own purity and integrity. *You* melt that cast-iron conscience? You stem that unbridled lust of self-gratification?—breed scruples and compunction in one who has trampled them down till he has no feeling for them but unmitigated contempt? Dementia!

Yet Amy was Elliston's wedded wife; he had wooed her true love, and won it. It was natural, right, that she should flatter him in her imagination, sacrifice comfort and pleasure without a murmur, to help him to shirk the consequences of his misconduct.

His passionate fancy for her, which he must gratify at the risk of his safety, was as good as dead, and he, perhaps, cursing this last love-prank that had played the mischief with his precarious fortunes, and threatened to bring him to ruin after all.

Right, Amy. No apt soil there for the growth of tenderness and affection for the wife, whose charms have been impaired by illness and grief, or ceased powerfully to attract, once possessed;

the woman, too, whose fatal curiosity had surprised the secrets he wanted to keep, whose discretion he did not trust, thus become a source of danger to him as well as a burden.

Is she the first who has suffered for attaching herself to a man of light affections? Elliston would never have harmed her unless she stood in his way; but if he saw in her a peril, a fatal obstacle to such freedom of enjoyment as was still within his reach

Again David recoiled from the turn his thoughts were taking. There was a long, heavy silence. Amy would walk no further. He saw she wished him to leave her here.

"Will you forgive me, Amy" was all he said, brokenly, for the rest dumb with despair.

To his surprise, her only answer was a burst of tears. But she turned from him and went, with a sign to him not to follow. He was beside himself with perplexity and distress. He could not speak. She would not listen. There was nothing for it but to part so, without leave-taking or farewell.

Now, first, David perceived what she must have gone through—how resolutely she had spurred her courage, her resolution to be loyal to herself and her instincts, and to him to whom they were henceforth devoted. Then, at the

height of the brave show, her nerve flagged one moment, a spring had given way, and he had a glimpse of the silenced, wounded, broken heart beneath.

Less besotted she perhaps, after all, than the friend who was wasting himself, soul and strength, for her who would not thank, who could not care for him—faithful to death to that scoundrell!

Walking on excitedly, David mechanically took the direction of the bathing-cove. He threw himself on the sand under the rocks, the picture of a purposeless waif, alone with the dreariest thoughts ever human heart had for companions.

All he *knew* against Elliston, Amy knew also. That gave her no right to leave him. She repudiated the suggestion as cowardly, wrong, and unwelcome besides. David's half-breathed unsupported suspicions branded him as wicked or mad in her sight: for the most part he himself judged them the monstrous brood of jealousy, the destructive offshoot of love. The same force that made him all passionate kindness to Amy manifested itself as passionate enmity to her desertless mate.

So ends his first and last adventure, as it must, in smoke. Go home, love's latest dupe,

the poorer by all that you possessed, and blush till your dying day for your puerile freak!

David had already composed his letter to Sims announcing his desertion, and promising him more money should the cruise end without Jacob Green's identity being betrayed, when a sudden new fear struck him—

"Amy will tell Elliston everything. . . . If he should blame her, suspect her of blabbing to me. . . . and some fresh risk to her should ensue?"

It decided him to play out his part to the bitter end, which seemed in any case not far off. If, in this way, he should gather some information as to the Ellistons' future movements, well, it might be for the best later on.

When, long after dark, Sims' rough-clad apprentice rejoined him on board as he had left, he learnt from this worthy that Elliston and his wife had had a long private conversation after their return together. Mrs. Elliston had retired early. The skipper was busy on deck till late. Nothing further had been heard about the sale of the yacht, and it had got about among the sailors that it was liable to be seized by the skipper's creditors at any moment.

CHAPTER XVII.

TWO IN A TRAP.

A SPIRIT of dissatisfaction amounting to insubordination, smouldering among the crew of the *Watersprite*, broke out the next day.

The suspicion of Elliston's financial unsoundness had grown to certainty. It was further understood that the projected sale of the yacht, on which the unpaid hands had relied, at the worst, for getting their dues, had fallen through. They grumbled and showed a strong disposition to strike. He would have to settle with them to-morrow or they would leave him, and he would find no fools to take his promise and their places.

The facts were reported by Mr. Sims, the only happy person on board, to David, who was careful not to show his face on deck that morning, sensible that after his yesterday's interview with Amy, his identity would be exposed to readier detection. However, nothing, assuredly, was further from Elliston and his

wife's thoughts than Green Jacob at the present crisis.

The skipper, said David's informant, treated the complaints with a lofty contempt, spoke privately to him about paying off the insolent fellows to-morrow, and getting decent men in their place for the remainder of the cruise. It was the cook's opinion that he must have come in for a windfall of some kind.

The morning passed without event. The skipper was going out fishing in the afternoon in a hired smack, taking a hand with him to row in case the wind dropped. When the moment came, disgusted with the black faces and disrespectful manners that met him on every side—the rascals seemed to make a favor of doing their business—he ordered up Jacob to attend him, remarking audibly, “He's no better than a girl at his work, and twice as clumsy, but at least he knows on which side his bread is buttered, and won't turn sulky and ask impudent questions.”

The summons came on David like a clap of thunder, but he obeyed perforce, and presented himself, feeling highly uncomfortable, and in doubt and dread as to what was going to happen.

“Jump in, sleepy-head,” said Elliston, rather

sharply. "Are you awake?" with a shove that would have roused a dormouse.

David, seated in the boat, still hesitated to push off.

"What the blank are you waiting for, man?" asked Elliston. Was the mutiny spread to the cook's boy?

David mumbled something about Mrs. Elliston—he thought she was coming?

"Who the devil asked you to think?" said Elliston, with a hearty laugh. "Mind your oars, young man. You'll need all your thinking for your work to-day."

Amy, as David now remembered to have heard, had gone on shore that morning. He had less fear of detection by Elliston, and almost enjoyed, as evidence of his continued unsuspectance, the taunting, rather brutal, banter with which his employer kept pelting him for fun, as they slid out to sea. The skipper was in a queer humor to-day—in mocking, overflowing, high spirits—giving free play to his random impulses—as unrestrained by the witnessing presence of this laughing-stock of his servants, this dolt of weak intellect, as he might by that of his dog.

There was a fresh breeze. He appeared to find in sailing recreation and occupation enough,

without troubling his fishing tackle. Once out of sight of the *Watersprite* and St. Peter's he became very attentive to his steering, glancing repeatedly at the chart. A heavy swell was running out at sea, and navigation in these waters is at no time a simple task, but Elliston was a master of his craft, and under his guidance, David, in spite of his misadventure of the other day, felt as safe as on dry ground.

And as they got farther and farther from British shores Elliston's mood changed again, his temper improved, and now and again he tossed a kindly phrase and a good-natured jest at the dullard opposite—as he would a bone to Madge or a copper to a crossing-sweeper—and shared his lunch with him liberally; Master Jacob's taciturnity and awkwardness confirming the character assigned to the cook's mate,—of one not strong in the upper story.

The afternoon was getting on; they had been out of sight of land for some hours. David, wholly ignorant of the lay of the coast and of nautical science, imagined they had tacked, and were making for St. Peter's. After looking out long and in vain for the shore line, he presently ventured to inquire if they were far from Guernsey.

“Not so far as from heaven,” replied Ellis-

ton, oddly, "but you're not there yet." Then with a palpable sneer, "Poor boy—are you wanting your tea? Try a pull at the whiskey flask instead, and see if it can't put a little heart into those greenwood sticks of arms of yours. However you've not done so badly to-day. I can see it's not the first time you've handled an oar."

He paused, to take a draught from the flask himself before tossing it to the other, then, abruptly, he addressed himself to his "hand" in the same rough but not unkindly tone of half quizzing:

"And so you've been so happy and comfortable on board the '*Sprite*' that you're fidgeting to be back there already, eh?"

David's countenance of stupid puzzlement was perfectly natural. He had no idea what his companion was driving at.

"I understood from Sims," the skipper went on, "that it was foreign parts—France and so on—you wanted to see."

"Eh," said David—his blank stare and sheepish embarrassment still calling for more precise explanations. Elliston, obviously, liked him exactly in proportion to his dense stupidity and slowness, as sure of his hold over him as though he had been an ape.

"Now supposed I shared your fancy, Jacob, and had a mind to take you across with me. St. Malo or the Havre's the very place for a promising young fellow of your sort; and, if I were to set you down there with a sovereign or two in your pocket, it's not you that'll have to complain of your treatment. A fine, sturdy, athletic lad like you" (David, even at this crisis, winced at a broad personal taunt that stung him like a hornet) "would be worth his weight in gold to more than one ship's captain that I know of. You've all the world before you—and only want an opening. I'll warrant that at the French port you'll very soon have your choice of half-a-dozen better paying berths on ship-board than I can offer you. It's more than you bargained for; but you seem a quiet, good lad, and I'd willingly give you a lift."

"Then it's the French port we're making for," said David, with stolid indifference.

"We'll see by-and-by," said Elliston, with a jaunty air of mock mystery. "If only this cursed wind doesn't leave us in the lurch altogether—we must be in before dark—confound you!"—as David, his attention distracted, missed his stroke, causing the boat to lurch violently and ship water. Elliston, he could see, was only restrained from throwing something

at his head by the necessity of minding the sail.

The unusually strong tide that was running here had put him partly out of his calculations; he glanced again at the chart.

"So that is his game," thought David, in tremendous excitement, "to abscond straight away—England's too hot for him—and, by leaving his yacht and his wife in the lurch, he has put those who may be watching him off the scent. He takes me to aid him—as he might a machine. A sort of idiot, whom he can bamboozle, use as he likes, or send to Davy Jones' locker, and nobody be, or want to be, the wiser."

What had forced on this *coup*? Doubtless Amy's faithful report of David Ferrier's confessed knowledge of Elliston's antecedents. Then he, who alone knew the whole truth about his case, had judged it critical—past mischief from his wife's indiscretion. By secret flight he might at any rate assure his own freedom and safety—deserting her whose company would have hampered it. David rowed with all his might. Oh, George Elliston, in this latest exploit of yours, did you but know it, you could not have selected a more zealous accomplice.

The French coast was sighted at last, but the

wind had completely dropped. Darkness was coming on; the two men tugged at the oars, but even with Elliston's vigorous efforts they made but slow progress in the heavy sea. The coast at this point was rocky and treacherous of approach, and destitute of harbors—the nearest port still distant, and the prospect of getting in before nightfall presently annihilated by a dense sea fog that came on, completely hiding the land. Elliston, for safety, judged it necessary to put farther out to sea. His irritation at this delay vented itself in railing at David, for not being a Goliath.

The fog thickened as the night fell; shore and sea-lights were invisible; it shrouded and settled down upon the waste of waters.

"Well, there's no help for it," said Elliston, philosophically, at last, "we must just stand out, and wait till it lifts, which it may do before morning. It won't last longer than that. So it's only a night at sea in an open boat. A nice little adventure for you—something to tell them about over the fire at home."

David would have preferred to forego the experience. He was wet and chilled by the fog, and stiff with his exertions; the next few hours, spent bobbing up and down in a lumpy, sea were bound to be highly disagreeable in every sense.

But the very monotony of the dismal scene and discomfort made the time pass faster than he expected, as it passes when there is nothing to mark the stages.

Master and man sat still and silent, but for Elliston's occasional imprecations on the fog, to relieve his impatience, and his periodical assaults on the spirit flask and provisions, meting out a somewhat meagre allowance of the same to his companion in the boat, chaffing him from time to time on his taste and relish and high personal qualifications, for seafaring life. David was told he might take a snooze if he liked; but the unpleasantness and strangeness of the situation forbade his getting beyond a sort of stupor, inducing a nightmare, which did not pass away immediately he opened his eyes, awake to his actual, incredible position. Alone, becalmed at night in an open boat at sea, with a man he was deceiving, a man he knew to be violent and unscrupulous, and believed capable of anything; he, David Ferrier, the soft, slack, homely-witted, do-nothing brother of his sisters!

Elliston had allowed himself forty winks. David, watching meanwhile, had his ears caught by a sound; he heard it unintelligently at first, and judged it distant too, but how rapidly it came nearer! He touched the skipper, who woke

in a flash ; before the other could speak, he had seized his oar.

“ Row,” he said, peremptorily, “ row, for your fool’s life.”

David needed no second bidding, though but dimly aware what the danger was. It was nearer than either of them thought. Sounds came to them muffled and confused by the fog. Elliston was out in his bearings—they seemed caught in the race of breakers—David could only obey orders, straining away at his oar. Then suddenly a shock from the keel flung him violently from his seat ; he felt half-stunned, choked with brine, the smack moved no more, fast on a sunken rock, and Elliston was baling the water out of her with his hat.

David’s implicit confidence in that man’s seamanship was such that the accident had come on him with the unexpectedness of an earthquake or a landslip. As he recovered his breath and his balance, he instinctively struggled up to the stern, where the boat was partly lifted out of the water, holding on to the mast, as an inexperienced rider to the pommel.

This time Elliston wasted no breath in swearing ; he was stooping down, stopping a leak, and trying to relight the lantern, which had been broken and extinguished in the collision ; and

very carefully investigating the injury done to the boat, questioning whether it would be safe to try and get her off. It seemed a very long time to David, and Elliston's silence more ominous than oaths.

When at length he had completed his examination, he did not speak; he seemed to have wholly forgotten his comrade. He sat with his back turned, muttering something inaudible, his head bent over the chart he was studying by lantern-light.

"What's to do, Mr. Elliston?" said a voice huskily, by-and-by.

He started. Had he really forgotten there was another human being besides himself in the boat?

For a while he made no reply, then presently changing his position to nearer where David was crouched by the mast, he said, in a sharpened, altered voice of reckless levity:

"I think you may make your will, my lad. It would puzzle the Almighty Himself to get us out of this."

His cool flippancy revived David's sense of security. He seemed to be joking; David, a silent figure, was staring through the mist to read in his face by lantern flashes what he really thought of their position.

Again Elliston pored awhile over the chart and compass—dubious and baffled.

“This accursed fog!—I thought we were two miles to the eastward—we’ve run on the Guillemot rocks, half-a-mile from the shore, where no boat can put off nor swimmer land, and three miles from the nearest fishing station. The rotten eggshell under us may go to pieces any moment, and must as the tide rises.”

The fog—the fog—it clung round them like a pall! they could not see the length of the boat; at moments scarcely discern each other’s faces by the spark of light from the lantern.

Now Elliston addressed himself cautiously to a second inspection of the damage, as though hoping to discredit the previous evidence of his senses, David awaiting his verdict with a thumping heart.

The skipper relinquished his task, with an inarticulate exclamation, and a gesture even more grimly expressive than the words that followed:

“You’d better say your prayers, boy. If it holds out another couple of hours it will be a miracle. I’d ask for it, if I were you; the Lord won’t work it for me.”

It was the same David, who, the other day, at the moment of sudden danger, had felt no

personal fear, in his impetuous eagerness for Amy's safety. Elliston's last plain words, informing him beyond hope's contradiction that their position was desperate, brought the cold sweat to his brow, taking all the power from his limbs. His intelligence was clouded by the death-terror sprung upon him, so close, so overwhelming—nothing to gloss it over or breed courage,—causing a deadly heart-sickness, an insensate, rebellious hunger to live, as if that would prevail against the destroyer, his turn come, his self, his world of strivings, of loves, and hopes, and faiths, about to be annihilated, perishable stuff as the boat that held him that would be driftwood to-morrow, firewood after.

Elliston, having completed his scrutiny, and taken such slight measures as were practicable for prolonging his own safety and that of the boat, settled himself coolly on the bench and lit a cigar. David recognized himself that man's inferior, and resented his own cowardice.

Presently the skipper broke out, as if to himself:

"D—n me! if I didn't say to myself when I started, joking-like: 'How if I ran her on the rocks and left her? Let them all think I'd dined with the fishes? No, no. Too risky a game to play.' And here, it's played itself; it's

food for fishes we shall be in d—d earnest.”

“Then there’s nothing to be done?” muttered David, his human weakness still impelling him to hide his eyes from the impending catastrophe, as though his guardian angel was bound to intervene.

“Curse God and die,” retorted Elliston, with sullen contempt. “Or perhaps you’re pious, and as afraid of doing one as the other.”

“Whereabouts do you think we are?”

“I tell you we’ve run on the Guillemots; the tide has three hours to rise yet, and then we’re done. If it wasn’t for the fog I’d swim for it now; but that would be certain death. I guess it’s that, anyway.”

The fog-whistle of a steamer sounded. They raised their voices in a shout, nerved by a gleam of hope, then listened, breathlessly still. The whistle was repeated at intervals, but growing fainter and fainter, till it ceased altogether.

“We are lost,” said Elliston, gloomily. “They cannot hear!”

So passed an hour, in the hideous, protracted monotony of waiting and waiting for the fog to lift; an empty chance that, and the only one.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BETWEEN THE DEVIL AND THE DEEP SEA.

THE two figures, crouched near together in the darkness, had scarcely exchanged a word. But the skipper had fits of talk, stimulated by repeated pulls on the spirit flask, inducing capricious changes of mood. At one moment he told his companion to keep a good heart, that they would get out of it yet; it would soon be light now, the fog might lift at any moment, and then he would swim to shore and bring help to the wreck. Then, as the dense impenetrable mist continued, saturating their clothes, chilling them to the bone, and the water rose and rose, making the actual danger more pressing, he broke into violent imprecations on the luck that had deserted him, just as he was kicking over the traces of matrimony and respectability; then fell to cutting ghastly jokes, as though to divert himself, or stimulate his own desperate courage, by reducing to a still more abject terror the dull soul of the ignorant companion of his fate.

But David, although he had lost his head in the shock of the first moment, when Elliston had been cool and capable, was now much more his own master than the other. His physical clinging to life was strong, but other thoughts, bitter and sweet, had surged up, breaking its tyranny. Had life been so dear to him that he could not contemplate the loss of such a treasure? Had it promised so richly? Amy—well, though she might never surmise it, his following her to protect her, which had brought him here, *had* worked for her safety, her gain; there was a comfort in that which was almost enough. . . .

Elliston had exhausted the liquor; his increased exhilaration venting itself in a flow of wild talk, forced-sounding gaiety, and somewhat inhuman attempts to upset the seeming equanimity of his comrade, which provoked him as greater than his own. Now he appeared to David to be tipsy; then some sign would show that all the while the skipper knew perfectly what he was saying and doing, and could check its extravagance if occasion arose. Feeling in his pocket, Elliston found a pack of cards, and pulled them out; he looked at them with a laugh.

“Let’s have a game,” he said, “unless your

hand shakes too much. It's better than counting our fingers. What can you play?"

David shook his head.

"Don't know how," laughed the other. "Flat! Well; let's cut for our lives. First to know if either or both of us shall get out of this mess alive. Yes or no. Black is yes; red, no. Cut away, lad."

The cards said: "Both?" "No!" "One?" "Yes!"

Elliston got excited. "Good for one of us—only one. Now which? Cut again. Lowest wins."

By the firefly's light of the lantern they stooped to cut. Elliston turned up the lowest figure. Hr shouted out with a fantastic elation.

"Another try," said he. "I'll give it you. Cut for your own life this time."

The luck was against David. Elliston chuckled.

"Take one chance more," he said. "This last throw shall decide—make sure there's no mistake."

But the cards were in the skipper's favor.

Elliston tossed them into the sea with a reckless gesture. "No question as to what's to become of you, Master Jacob: you'll have to follow the pack before long, if there's any truth

in them. It's a pity," he added, with sudden plain sincerity; "for I must say, for a land-lubber, you take your nasty scrape fine and quiet, unless, as I suspect, your chicken heart's frightened your tongue into a palsy. How do you feel now? Scared?"

"Not much."

The muffled and uncertain voice so belied the words to the skipper's ears, as to elicit a laugh and a jeer. "Poor devil, he can't keep it up."

It was not in nature that David should be cool in the present extremity, as he thought himself; ordinary motives and checks were out of count; and he took his passions for reason, now that his active detestation of Elliston, clamoring for expression under his insults, was making it a material impossibility for him to keep up his slavish part any longer. It seemed incredible that his enemy should not know him.

"Oh, you're a plucky boy," continued the latter, restlessly. "I suppose you've a white conscience—got nothing to fear in the world you're going to. More than some of us can say for ourselves."

"More than you can say for yourself!" said Jacob's voice slowly, as if echoing the last speech.

"Did I say that? Well, no more than true." He gave a loud laugh. "But you've been a good boy, lived all your life in a farm-yard, like a barn fowl. I could tell you little stories that would start the eyes out of your ass's head, and set your goosequills bristling."

"You needn't confess to me," said David chokingly.

In this dreariest moment, with the end just at hand, his disguise filled him with loathing and contempt; he was bursting to throw off the mask. Why not? Why not? with nothing to hope or fear now, from dearest friend or direst enemy?

"*I* confess to *you*?" Elliston chuckled. "Ha! ha! a good joke! Guess you'd rather not hear the terrible yarns of this sinner—you—Jacob, or Green, or whatever your name is."

"My name is David Ferrier."

Acting sickened him. He had lived down the unmanaging torture of fear; he could die, since he must; give him this taste of fierce pleasure first, the wild relief of speaking out. If Elliston in a fury threw him overboard, as he had Joe Mansel for a less offence, David would almost thank him for abridging this waiting for execution. In his excitement he had fully expected to feel Elliston's hand on his throat, the moment

the words had passed his lips. Had he not heard—not taken in?

“David Ferrier,” he repeated, “I say—do you know it?”

“I know your voice now,” said Elliston, slowly, but really unable, in his unutterable astonishment, to grasp the full purport of the disclosure, “but—” here he saw his young neighbor rid himself, with a jerk, of the head-gear that had served as so effectual a mask—“but I say—now what in thunder you, the supernumerary—you—Ferrier, on board my yacht in *mufti*—and what for, pray, you young skulker?” His scarce-changed contemptuous tone, as to an inferior animal, whose proceedings cannot claim serious notice, was like a kick, driving David on to defy and provoke him.

“When you left Orestone,” he said, “I swore to follow you, to know why or where—though it should cost me my life—as it has done.”

For all that David thought himself past injury by any ruffian’s revenge, something in him quailed at the sudden animal ferocity of Elliston’s tone as he said:

“Mrs. Elliston—*knew*—of this precious game of yours?”

“She know?” All the secret, pent-up bitterness of the last four months betrayed itself

in the self-mockery of his spontaneous exclamation. "Had she so much as dreamt or suspected, would you not have heard everything from her the next instant, and I been turned out neck and heels, with the indignity an unsuccessful trickster deserves?"

"True for you," retorted Elliston, with malicious but not unnatural enjoyment of poor David's heart-burnings, strong in death, at Amy's lukewarm sentiments towards him, her friend, compared to the loyal constancy of her devotion to her unregenerate lover. "I knew you from the first, Master David—one of those half-baked, mooning nincompoops who put down their necks for a woman to tread on, who doesn't even care to know what it is. Ha, ha! caught in your own trap, you young poacher. So you didn't like us together, eh? Well, I'm leaving her at all events, and I'm taking you to hell with me. Are you satisfied?"

"Perfectly," retorted David, "since her life is out of your hands. I said you needn't confess to me. I know—I know all about you."

"So she told me," said Elliston, coolly, "last night, and we consulted how to get quit of your meddling and put you off the scent."

"She did not tell you all," said David, his fierce-rising torrent of animosity fed by Ellis-

ton's derision—"she could not—I did not tell her—I know you; she doesn't. Ned—whom you quarrelled with and shot on Roden Down—where's the use of lying now? I tell you I *know* he died that night, as well as if I had seen it, and how. He wanted his money, more than it was convenient for you to pay; you fell out; it ended as you meant it should end if he showed his teeth—and safely—for you—who got quit at once of a debt and a danger. His blood on your hand was your only accuser. The Windstone Pits never give up their dead. If you fell on your knees, George Elliston, and prayed heaven to forgive you, I should not feel a whit more certain of it than I do now. Do you understand now why I followed when you led Amy, your wife, away?—I, knowing that that hand of yours was fresh from a murder."

Said Elliston, with a sneer, "That's a stronger term than we should commonly apply to such an occurrence as the casual knocking over of a nigger."

His infernal composure made David mad to break through it.

"Ned was silenced," he hissed out; "but Amy—she knew what you couldn't trust her to keep to herself. You would have liked to seal her lips—you nearly succeeded—that day

in the harbor. I helped to prevent that, you know."

"My lad," said Elliston, in whom David had succeeded in rousing the human devil at last, "I'm going to stop *your* mouth for you with salt water; it's let you off long enough."

David heeded him not. He had lived; he had had his day, in that one moment of intemperate exultation.

But Elliston, mindful, doubtless, that any violent movement or struggle might precipitate the collapse of their frail vessel, restrained himself, and made no attempt to execute his savage threat. Inured to danger, he, in the most hopeless extremity, retained and acted on the instincts of prudence and self-preservation; whilst with David, bred up in soft security, now that he felt their position desperate, precautions dropped from him like etiquette.

There was a dead silence, broken only by the lapping of the water under the crazy planks at their feet. Elliston broke into a sudden laugh.

"Well, upon my soul, Mr. David Ferrier, you've done fairly well for a home-lad and a milksop and a beginner! Outwitted Great Sandy: set spy on his doings, bamboozled him, shadowed him—or his wife—made love to her

under his eyes for aught I know. Pity such a promising career should be cut short on the Guillemots ! ”

David, in the reaction from his brief frenzy, felt even his ordinary animation deserting him. A dull apathy clogged his brain and his tongue, reducing his attitude of open defiance to one of dumb, dogged fortitude. He had done with his enemy ; it had gladdened him to vent the uncontrollable jealousy and hate that consumed him, fierce as Elliston's own. As for the rest, “ surely,” he thought, “ the bitterness of death is past.”

Ten minutes elapsed ; neither had stirred or spoken. The drenching mist, cold, and exposure had slightly benumbed David's senses. A vague impression that the fog was breaking aroused him one moment, but only to see it close round them thicker than ever. Elliston was leaning over the side to mark the rise in the water level.

“ Well, I'm going to swim for it,” spoke his voice of a sudden. “ I'll have to in half-an-hour ; and I'll not wait till I'm so many degrees weaker. Better anything than sit here to be choked.”

David heard him divesting himself of his coat, transferring the contents of the pockets,

and leisurely preparing for the plunge, remarking aloud to himself, "It's a ticklish chance, but I'll take it. Half-an-hour more of this fog and I shan't be able to move hand or 'foot."

David looked and felt as if he had already reached that point.

Elliston, when he was quite ready, paused contemplatively, his presence of mind acute in the moment of action.

"Now, have you any money about you, I wonder," he reflected aloud, glancing down on David's person exactly as if it were a chest to be searched.

He was proceeding to search it; but David instantaneously had pulled out his pocket-book and flung it from him—overboard, he hoped; but Elliston caught it deftly on the wing.

"There's a hundred pounds," said David, goaded to a taunt, "for you to take to the devil—your master. But at least you go your rogue's way there—*alone*."

In one breath with the last word came Elliston's retort a blinding blow, though David, withdrawing his head quickly, only received half its violence. The same instant he felt Elliston lay hold of his left arm with crushing force, and give it a wrench as he tried to drag him from his post. The man's wort

instincts had been unveiled—reminded how he had been found out, tracked, gulled, his safety endangered by this wretched boy. . . .

David's only thought was to sell his life as dearly as he could. He had taken a double turn with his right wrist round one of the rigging ropes, and resisted desperately. Elliston should not dislodge him without a frantic struggle, in which the boat would infallibly go to pieces under them. He would drown, of course, but the other man should go down with him, if his death-grip could do it.

Possibly Elliston saw that, and it changed his mind. After all, the cruellest for David, as the safest for himself, was to leave him to his fate. Relinquishing his grasp of David's arm—which fell nerveless to his side, feeling as if it had been jammed in a doorway—he stood up, keeping one eye on his adversary. He just stirred him contemptuously with his foot, as if he were a scorched hare or buck, as he deliberately examined the contents of David's pocket-book.

"Well, I'll take care of this for you," he said. "I think you owe me so much damages for your poaching freaks. Now see how you like the other side of the game. It's far from certain I shall get ashore, most unlikely that I shall do so in time to bring out a search party for you,

and quite certain you won't want your money here in the meantime."

David understood.

The Guillemot rocks might refuse to tear him, the sea to suck him down, when the boat sank, sooner than Elliston come to his rescue.

There was a plunge, then all was still.

David, growing stiff and numb, feeling literally frozen to the mast, had not lost consciousness as half-an-hour lapsed, and a brief torpor he thought had lasted much longer was broken by a pang of instant dread. He looked down fearfully to note the rise in the tide level, and how few moments more the coming struggle in the water was to keep him waiting.

Instead, it appeared to him that the wreck was less submerged than when Elliston had left it. He strained his smarting eyes to see. No doubt whatever. There was the tide mark, above. Elliston had calculated that the water had still an hour or more to rise, and it was running out already !

The spark of senseless hope came as a refinement of fate's cruelty—to prolong the torment of suspense—but it broke the apathy of exhaustion. It was quite light now; he forced himself to move, to keep his eyes on the alert; then for a minute the fog broke. It gathered again

immediately, but in that moment David had seen something.

A dim dark line—what was that? The land—but so near?—separated from him by a very few hundred yards of detached patches of rock with wide openings between—then yellow sands with white wavelets curling over on the sloping beach.

Had Elliston been wholly mistaken?—as the most careful navigator may miscalculate in so dense and persistent a fog. It was not the Guillemots on which they had struck, after all.

A desolate and barren-looking shore, where none would pass to hear the cries he had little strength left to utter. But a land-breeze had sprung up the fog was breaking on all sides now, and when another half-hour had gone by, and the boat, less beaten by the sunken tide, still held together, David asked himself whether, by-and-by, a man—a desperate man—might not, though a poor swimmer, by floundering through the deeper water, crawling over the rocks, reach the shallower pools, and wade thence to shore?

In good condition—ay, without doubt; but he could hardly have been further from that desirable state; with one arm, moreover, thanks to Elliston, nearly useless.

Half-an-hour later a dripping, ill-conditioned, wild-looking human figure dragged itself out of the surge on the shingle, up to the strip of sand beyond, and there sank down. Bruised by falling over the sharp and slimy rocks, his clothes torn, his feet and hands cut, choked by the waves that had half-drowned him in the deeper pools; there seemed no breath, no whole part in his body.

But the sense of the firm ground under him was the cordial; the faint warmth of the risen sun brought back some vitality to his limbs; the fog had disappeared—utterly.

He staggered to his feet and looked for the wreck. The sunken rocks stood out clear, but every sign of the boat had disappeared.

The vaporous air had become preternaturally clear, and the sun streamed down on him with increasing warmth—a life-dispensing god.

The life David had repeatedly cursed, because it would not give him the things he wanted, and that he had more than once been minded to throw away, as not worth living out—that bare life whose sudden doom he had found yet more unendurable—had been left him for better or worse.

He fell upon the sand and hid his face, sobbing for joy and thankfulness.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE HAVEN UNDER THE HILL.

LATER some French carters, on their way down to the beach for a load of sand, met the castaway limping up the road in a plight which excited their compassion. They assisted him to reach the hospital at St. Malo, where he was pinned down for two days by the results of his misadventures. He had just enough loose coin in his pockets to provide him with a fresh outfit and pay his passage to British shores. On the third day he started for Guernsey.

Here he found the mysterious flitting of Mr. Elliston of the *Watersprite* the talk of the place. He had privately sold the yacht, as was now known, and gone off with the price of her in his pocket. A letter written by him before leaving had been delivered to his wife the next day, and its contents were known all over the island, thanks to Amy's maid, who had profited by her mistress's mental distraction at the first moment of its perusal to run her eye over the pages.

He wrote most affectionately, denouncing in

sincere-sounding phrases the ill-hap that left him no choice but to act as he had done. The separation, he swore, should not last a day longer than he could help, but his safety required it in the present pass. He would write the instant it was safe to do so, and tell her where to come out to join him.

Amy had immediately telegraphed to her mother to meet her, and started for Southampton by the next boat. Thence they had proceeded to London, presumably for legal advice, Elliston having bequeathed to them, it was whispered, a pretty financial imbroglio. Their address was known, and, having procured that, to London David betook himself, entering it with little more than the traditional half-crown in his pocket. But if he had to tramp all the way, he said to himself, he must see Mrs. Beverley. She at once gave him an appointment at her hotel.

To her David told his strange tale plainly; his first, grotesque-seeming conjectures, born in his brain by Ned's utterances and manner, coming on Mr. Masters' narration, then fresh in his memory—ideas as unreal in their first presenting as an object seen double or a fancied fall in a dream; their gradual development; Ned's statement of his partner's debt to him,

confirmed by Elliston when he applied to David for a loan ; his nocturnal encounter with the Samoan runaway on Roden Down, and with Elliston afterwards ; his strong, but unsupported suspicions of foul play (he had searched the spot the next morning and found no confirming trace whatever ; the work, if done, had been done thoroughly) ; the haunting surmise driving him, when he found Elliston departing abruptly with Amy in the yacht, to follow them secretly, not to lose sight of them ; the mysterious capsizing of their sailing-boat in the harbor ; his interview with Amy, and his fishing trip with Elliston on the morrow ; their benighting and wreck in the fog, and how, when all seemed lost, he had dropped his incognito before Elliston left him to try and escape by swimming.

Of the violent scene at the last he did not speak ; he shunned the recollection of moments that had brought to light in himself something of Elliston's savagery of disposition. He would perhaps have doubted their reality, but for an unwelcome reminder in his left arm and in his temples, which he was to feel for a long time to come.

He wondered how much, or if any, of his story Amy's mother would decide to repeat to her daughter.

"All—never," she said, with a shudder, "unless indeed he should ever return or summon her to him. Perhaps he is drowned. Do you know I could hope it?"

"I feel sure he is alive," said David. "He was a powerful swimmer, and the shore easy of access, as he little expected. As for coming back, I saw him last ; I say he will not."

The last few months of excitement were an irregularity in a destiny like David Ferrier's, with an extreme tendency the other way. They were succeeded by three years of quiet and unbroken monotony, spent in the ordinary routine of an impecunious and hardworking art-student's life. He was not penniless, Mrs. Beverley having insisted on repaying him the fifty pounds lent to her son-in-law. He managed to eke out this sum for an unconscionable time, which I shall not name, lest it should too far tax the credulity of the gentle reader ; ultimately obtaining some paying work, for nautical illustrations, which helped him along, and he wanted for none of the necessities of life. Mrs. Beverley wrote to him regularly, Amy now and then. Their letters were his luxuries, the only ones.

From the former he learnt that the result of inquiries set on foot to ascertain Elliston's fate

pointed to his having effected his escape without difficulty.

A man answering to his description had been seen at the Havre, and embarked in a ship for Valparaiso, but, on its arrival there, he was ascertained to have left the vessel at an intermediate port at which it had touched, and his further movements baffled those who were prosecuting the search, the more easily since they had no motive for excessive zeal to succeed in it.

Nor was more heard of him, till, two years and a half later, a paragraph appeared in a colonial paper that led Mrs. Beverley's solicitor to follow up the clue here afforded.

The report was of the accidental death, in a ray with the islanders of New Britain, of a labor-agent for a German colony, suspected to have been no other than the notorious Alexander or Great Sandy, mistakenly certified to be drowned some years before, but lately known to be alive; said to have reappeared in England, meanwhile, under his real name of George Elliston (in the colonies he had from the first passed by his second Christian name of Alexander, as his supposed patronymic), obtained admission by dint of his good looks, plausible manners, and the considerable sum of money in his possession into good society, fallen in love with

a Devonshire young lady, and won her ; but, an incorrigible spendthrift and adventurer, had scarcely brought his bride home before his lavish outlay got him into difficulties, tempting him to obtain possession of trust money by making fraudulent representations to the solicitor, and failing thus to improve his position he had suddenly fled the country and returned to his haunts. The Pacific is wide, and the commissioners of the law were to want him in vain up to the end. But his fate was characteristic.

It was in one of his old semi-kidnapping expeditions that he had been murdered by natives in revenge for previous frauds practised on them or their friends. Trusting for protection and success to his personal powers of intimidation or persuasion, he had landed alone, as his custom was, to face a suspicious horde. This once had miscalculated.

A true record of the brilliant career thus abruptly terminated would, the writer added, startle those who believed the successful pirate and sea-robber to be a thing of the past, a product incompatible with the latter end of the nineteenth century.

The identity of the dead man was established this time beyond a doubt, by his companions on the vessel, who witnessed the murder, and suc-

ceeded in bringing off his body, after burning three villages, by way of reprisals.

Six months later, David, the first time these three years, showed his face at Lannacombe.

His people, since meanwhile he had never once written to ask for money, had believed him living, like the prodigal, on his three hundred pounds. Had those young ladies, his sisters, known they had a brother, whose weekly expenses for three years had been kept rather below the ordinary artisan's level—well, they would have counted him the bigger fool for his pains. What should he do it for?

Old Ferrier, despite his imperious temper and his obstinacy (which David inherited), had a soft side. By judicious wheedling his son could always have extracted supplies—under protest. That he should prefer to forego the ordinary comforts of life, and all gentlemanly attributes and amusements that cost money, was inconceivable, or else lunacy.

Into his ways they never inquired, nor ever would, whilst he lived in a slum, as they described the cheap district where he lodged, and the sole but lively solicitude with which he inspired them during this period was the ever-present dread that one of these days they would hear of a slum sister-in-law. However, nothing

assuredly was further from poor David's thoughts than matrimony during that plodding, uneventful, but not unfruitful, and distinctly salutary term of sober industry and enforced self-denial.

There was merry-making at Lannacombe on the occasion of his visit, but not on his account. David had come home to be present at his sister Eveleen's wedding.

For Captain Corydon had been caught at last in the treacherous toils of a long-drawn flirtation. How, he could hardly have told you; but he was an engaged man, and not so weak as to repent.

Lannacombe was rapturously elated. It was almost a brilliant match: three thousand a year, more to come, present quarters at Aldershot, where Lalla and Barbara, coming to stay, were warranted not long to remain on the spinster list. In the general jubilation even David got a favorable reception; The Owlet was voted improved, the whole family saw everything in rose-color. Old Ferrier's business was thriving; he was really glad to see Dave back again, with no visible sign about him of having taken to drinking, or low company, or become a Socialist, with untrimmed hair and a soft hat; "and, thank heaven, unwedded to that daughter of the

people," sighed Barbara devoutly under her breath. Merciful powers, only think—Captain Corydon, so highly connected, so exclusive—it might have broken off Eveleen's match! David met a shower of sisterly smiles, and they sincerely thought to please him by telling him Mrs. Elliston, poor thing, had grown quite plain since the illness that had followed on her troubles.

The facts about her husband had oozed out very gradually at Orestone, lessening the shock to the society where he had made himself a favorite. He had gone to France to avoid paying his bills. Well, the Dodbrookes had once had to do that. He had been tampering with the settlement and other money. That was more serious; but his wife's relations would step in and prevent scandal. Amy, after a long absence with her mother in Italy, was definitely established as a grass widow at Sunnyside, before it was thoroughly understood that things had come out about Mr. Elliston which made it impossible for him ever to show his face in reputable society again.

The day after Eveleen's wedding David spent at Sunnyside. By Amy's particular request he had brought over some specimens of his recent painting work. She inspected them with unfeigned interest.

Of late she had been induced to take up her sketching again, to distract her mind, and worked now more methodically than of yore; but the result was discouraging. Something appeared to have deserted her—some spark was spent, not readily kindled now.

“David, I never believed you would do anything half so good!” was her spontaneous ultimate comment, spoken with grave candor.

“It is not very good, Amy!” he sighed likewise.

“Ah, but you could do nothing like it three years ago; and you will do better yet. You get on, whilst I—I seem to have lost the secret of my smudges,” she said, with a mournful intonation. “I finish no better than I used, and sketch less well——” She broke off. “David, are you going back to town?”

“Yes; just to prepare for leaving it altogether,” he told her, unfolding his present plan, which was to take a small house in Orestone, and there establish himself with his work. “I can’t get the boats and subjects I want in London. Besides, London is no home for me; but I have got good out of it, and shall go there occasionally if I can afford it, for hints and for study. But I mean to live in the country and here.”

He saw on her eyes and lips that she was glad of it.

Amy was very tender to him upon meeting again, her retrospective compunction for having treated him with too light regard, asking only to make itself felt in the frankest return of the old confidence and mutual expansion, which was like manna to the shy and lonely soul of her friend that had been. But the time was dead when he could delude himself as to the requital it lay not in her power to bestow; it may be that after the ordeal he had gone through he had ceased to desire it. She felt the change, and it left her the freer to be kind.

"It is good news that you are coming back," she said, thoughtfully. "As for me, mother and I shall most certainly never leave Sunnyside."

"Is that likely, Amy?" said he, incredulously. "One day you will feel the want of a fuller and richer life than this world-forgotten place affords."

She raised her face—the face which every one but David saw had lost all its beauty.

"You can think that, you who know all about me?" she said, in a smothered voice.

The eyes shone but faintly now; the bloom was gone from her trembling lips and thinned cheek, the gloss from her hair; there were lines

on the brow. Tokens that she had suffered the most, which it smote his heart to see. But the face, the same still, and sweet, held him still with the early fascination which he will never overcome.

"No, David," she said, recovering herself presently; "here I shall make myself happy enough. But you—a man—the time must come—I hope it will not be very soon, though—when Orestone will fail to satisfy you."

"Wait and see," he said.

"If it was any one else," said Amy, softly, with just a touch of her old bright manner and a sparkle of her eye, "I should say they would not keep me waiting long."

"But being me," said David, in his quiet way, as she paused significantly, "you know I shall not be the first to change."

Amy looked at him. She gave him both her hands, and he felt their impulsive pressure. David could not speak; her eyes were full of tears.

So it came to pass that David settled at Orestone, and worked on; his technical skill improving till his pictures, if deficient in the more attractive qualities, stand out from the mass by their accurate draughtsmanship and careful handling that bid fair to give them real

value and assure him a good, if never a brilliant, position. He is on excellent terms with his family, but pursues his own course on independent lines.

From Eveleen came to him anon a flattering summons to stand godfather to her first child—he and Lord Otho; the one for show, the other for use. “David,” said Barbara, mischievously, “was born an uncle,” one that might be counted on to do his duty in that capacity. Who knows if not to the degree of remaining an old bachelor to the end?

His renewed relations with Mrs. Beverley and her daughter, on the old familiar footing, are close and constant. Amy’s genuine interest in his work is an inspiring stimulus, and her acute criticism and invaluable suggestions, always at his service, are touched with genius, that gift of hers of which little more was to come. In painting she confines herself to a modest sphere: little studies of still life by the sea-shore; of marine flowers, sea anemones, madrepores, cup corals, and other beauties of the deep, mostly neglected by artists, to which her hand imparts a curious charm.

The little world around them looks on, and sometimes wonders at this apparently successful instance of a friendship between two persons

of opposite sexes. Amy talks confidently of the time to come when they shall be two old fogies—art fogies—still pursuing the same quiet routine as now. Orestone, though it has accustomed itself to the present situation, still prophesies that sooner or later it will end in a match.

But David knows better !

THE END.

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